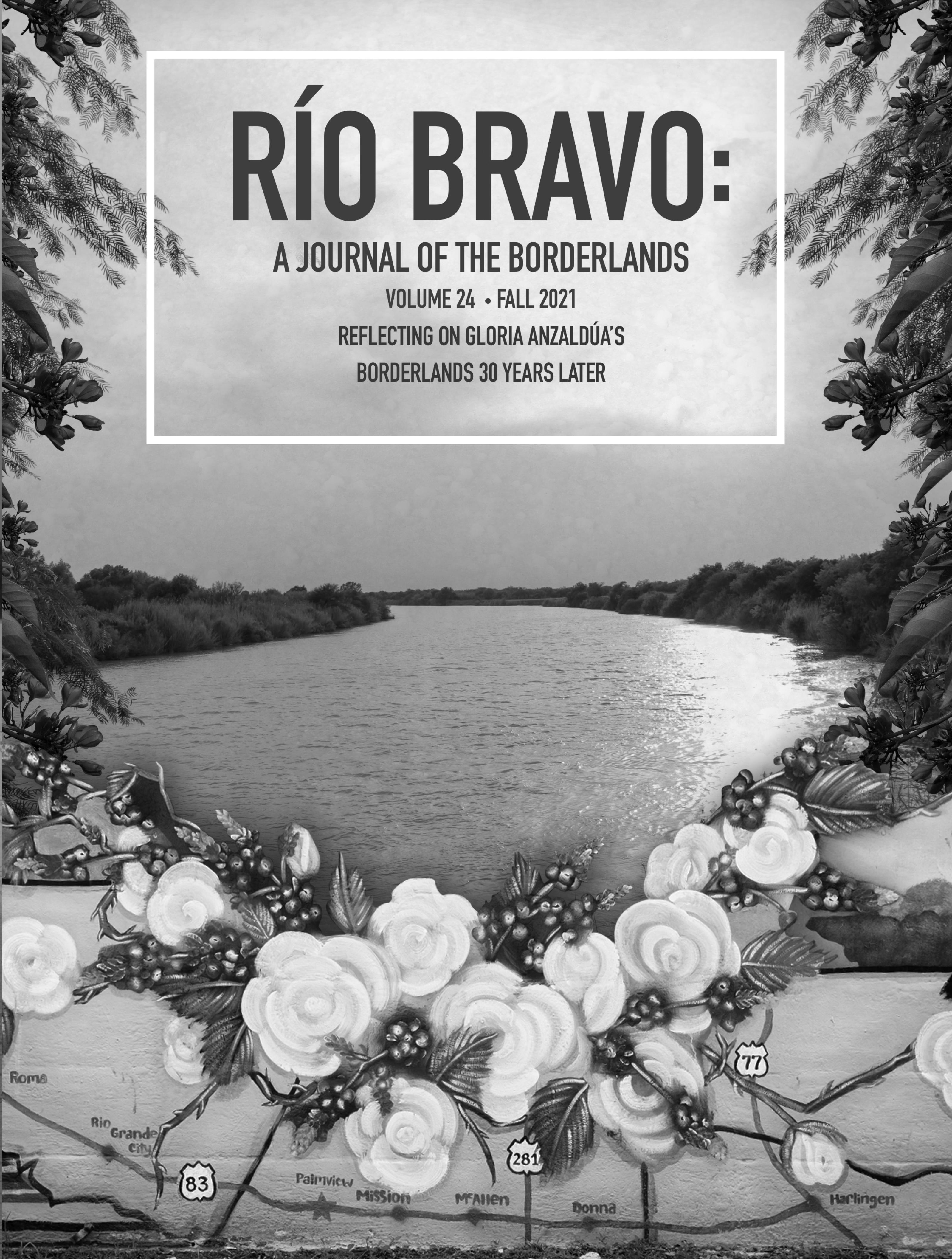
RÍO BRAVO:

A JOURNAL OF THE BORDERLANDS

VOLUME 24 • FALL 2021

REFLECTING ON GLORIA ANZALDÚA'S
BORDERLANDS 30 YEARS LATER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Río Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands
Center for Mexican American Studies
EEDUC 2.216B
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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Website: https://journals.tdl.org/rbj/index.php/rbj/index

Cover art by Arnulfo Daniel Segovia

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Rio Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed publication of the Mexican American Studies Center at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The journal publishes scholarly and creative works about Mexican descent communities in both South Texas and nationally. The journal promotes debate, dialogue, awareness, and insight into the U.S.-Mexico border experience.

ISSN: 1067-0149

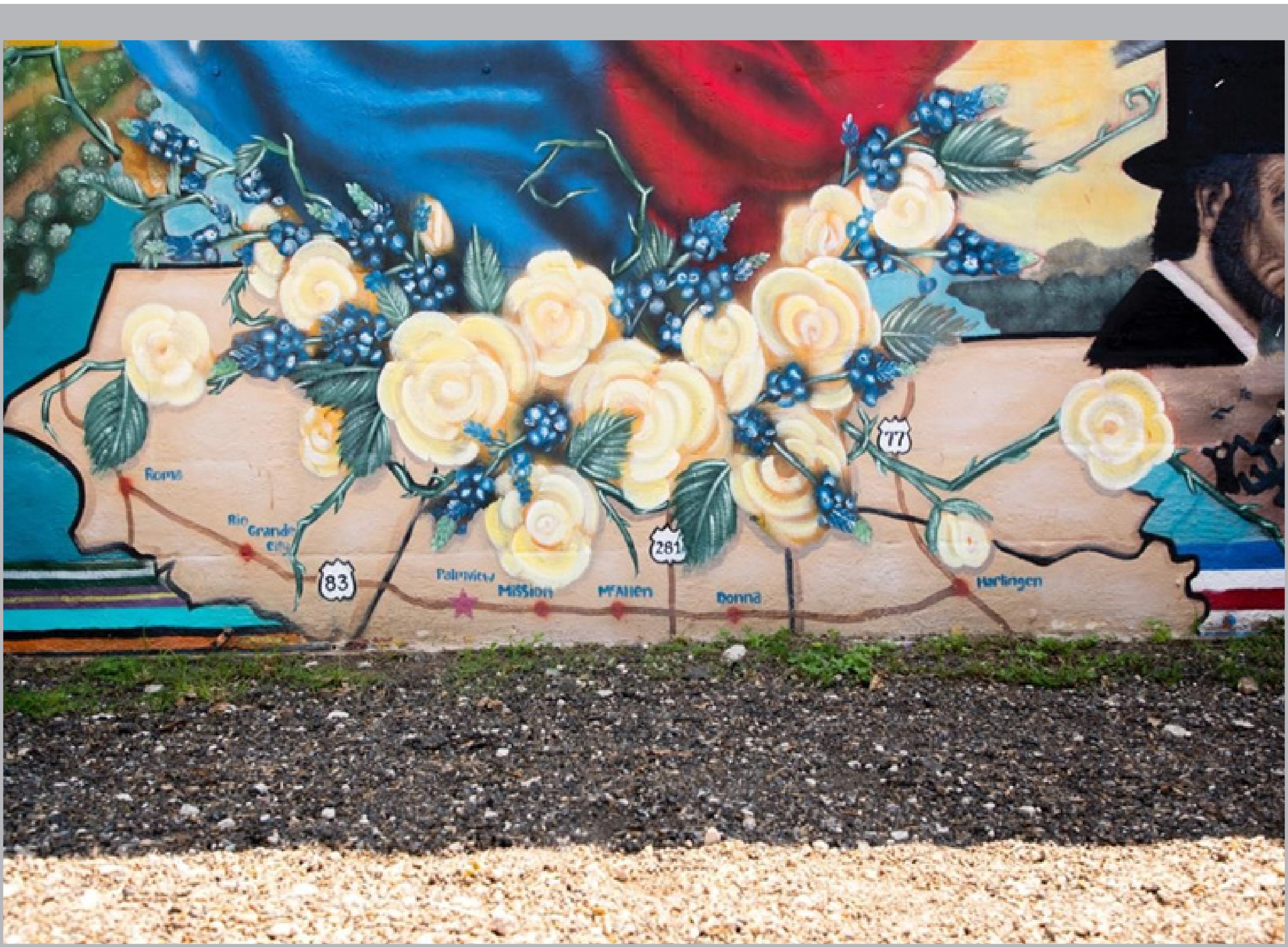
Río Bravo:
A Journal of the Borderlands

Reflecting on Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands 30 Years Later

Edited By
Francisco Guajardo
&
Amanda Lee Tovar

Volume 24 | Spring 2020

Roosters Barbershop & Hair Designs, Palmview, Tx.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Photograph by Arnulfo Daniel Segovia

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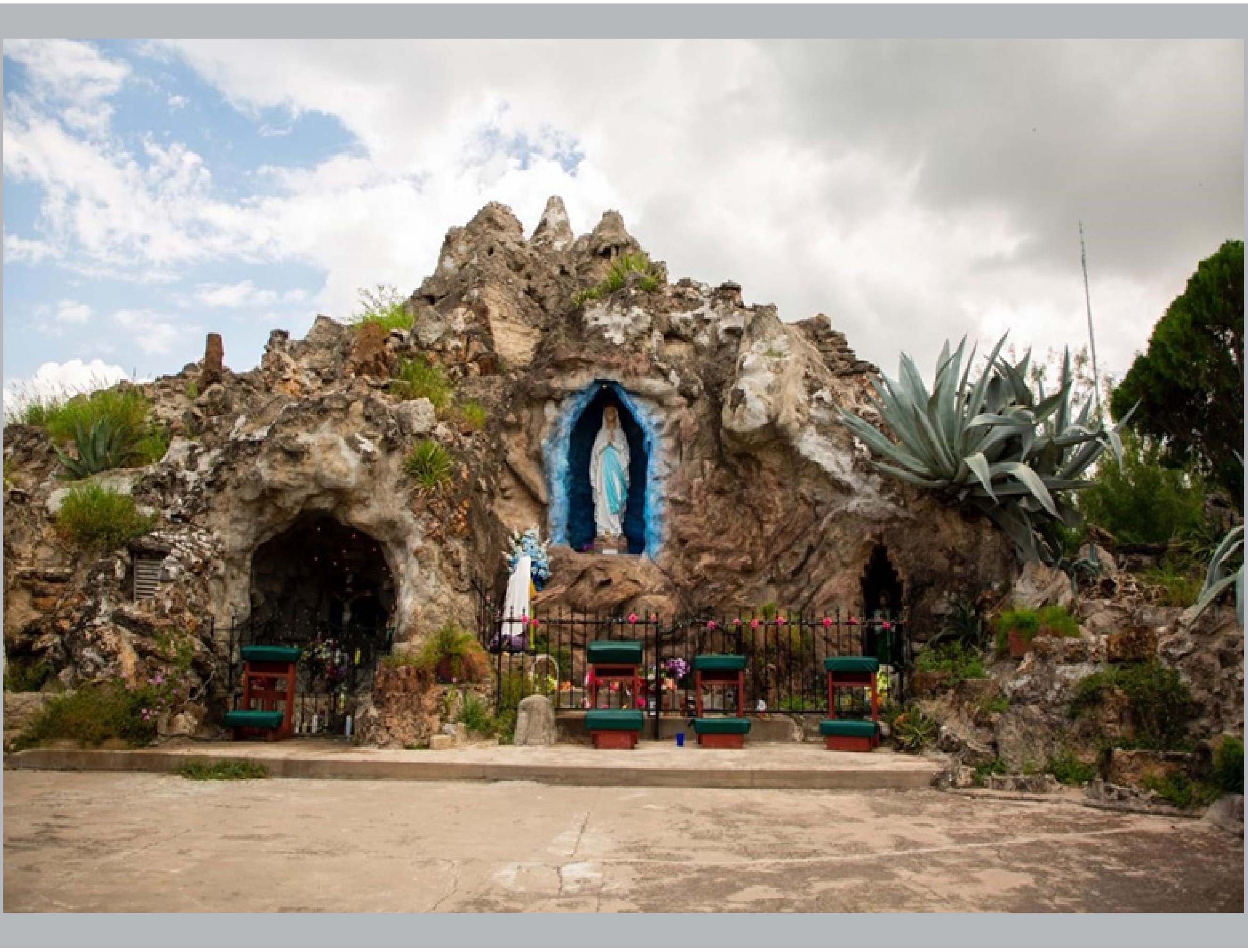
This edition of the Río Bravo is dedicated to Gloria Anzaldúa, her legacy, her family and the new mestizxs.

Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto, Rio Grande City, Tx.



Photograph by Arnulfo Daniel Segovia

Life Within and Beyond: The Legacy of Borderlands

Amanda Tovar

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2017, and as a commemoration of the innovative text, the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's Center for Mexican American Studies prepared a yearlong celebration in honor of its legacy. Many mujeres across a multitude of disciplines came together to coordinate events that ranged from poetry readings, symposia showcasing student research rooted in Anzaldúan theory, bilingual story hours, and the annual El Retorno: El Valle Celebra [a] Nuestra Gloria. This edition of *Río Bravo*, like the year itself, is dedicated in honor of *Borderland's* legacy, which has provided all of us the space to examine our own borders for a deeper appreciation and critique, as well as the possibility for healing those heridas abiertas (Anzaldúa 3) that still exist and hemorrhage today.

Anzaldúa describes borders as physical, psychological, sexual and spiritual (Anzaldúa, "Preface"). She writes that borders exist wherever two or more cultures, races or classes collide with each other—a place where the "space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Anzaldúa, "Preface"). Anzaldúa's definition of borders eventually grew into nepantla, liminal spaces between worlds (Anzaldúa 243). The Río Grande Valley of the South Texas is nestled between the border of México and the Falfurrias and Sarita checkpoint, and although the Valley is in the United States, the checkpoint places it in between México and the greater U.S.—a physical nepantla.

As of late the Borderlands have been falsely categorized as a warzone occupied by rapists and "bad hombres" by Donald Trump, the current president of the United States, but those of us who live our day-to-day lives here experience a radically different reality. We love, create, share, discuss, live and breathe in this region in spite of the colonizing attempts of purging this place of our ancestors. Our Borderlands may be portrayed as a wasteland in mass media, but the nepantla I live in is beautiful. The overlapping that exists between the U.S. and México has provided and nourished all parts of my mestiza soul.

Like Anzaldúa, I too am a border woman who grew up between two cultures straddling the Tejas-Mexican border (Anzaldúa, "Preface"). In 1987 Anzaldúa wrote that "hatred, anger and exploitation" were the prominent features of the landscape due to the domination of people of Indigenous and Mexican origin (Anzaldúa, "Preface"). To some extent, this is no longer the case. As a community we are collectively learning to shed our self-hatred that stems from the legacies of domination and are becoming stronger by slowly overcoming those feelings (Anzaldúa, "Preface").

Situated in opposition to our communal strength, the current sociopolitical climate does exhibit sentiments of hatred and anger, and still practices exploitation against our communities. These sentiments and exploitative practices have made navigating life outside of the Borderlands painful and uncomfortable. I have also experienced the discomfort of home that Anzaldúa wrote about as well as the alienation that comes from the negative outside sentiments which creep into our lives through the media, but *Borderlands* has also taught me to embrace the uncomfortable and "alien" feelings. For Anzaldúa, alien feelings prompt the dormant aspects of our consciousness to be awakened. While the conditions that lead border residents to feel alien are vile and volatile, the "alien" feelings are accompanied by a skillset—something that we should be proud of. The alien feeling teaches us to navigate a world with bigoted race, class, and gender biases with our heads held high. Despite the harsh circumstances that must be endured, the skills we develop ensure our survival in a world that continually rejects us. And with the help of Anzaldúa, we learn to *thrive* in this world while building a new, better one.

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1 Photographs by poet and photographer Arnulfo Segovia, videographer Frank Segovia, and myself from around the Río Grande Valley are included throughout this edition to showcase its beauty.

*2 * "Alien" is in direct response to Gloria Anzaldúa's preface of Borderlands.*

The legacy of Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* has allowed us to live outside of the shadows imposed upon us by colonialism (Anzaldúa, "Preface"). Throughout history, colonizers have quite literally killed off our ancestors, cultures and mother tongues. They shamed us for our practices and imposed religion and language upon us, the result being a forced assimilation which is now so intricately woven into the world we live in today. Anzaldúa untangles the legacies of aggression and forced assimilation through her writings, inspiring us, making the painful empowering and inspiring courage to overcome the violence.

The authors in this edition are the new mestizxs Anzaldúa calls for when she writes "But we Chicanos no longer need to beg for entrance, that we need to always to make the first overture—to translate to Anglos, Mexicans and Latinos, apology blurting out of our mouths with every step" (Anzaldúa, "Preface"). They utilize and embrace Anzaldúa's theories across wide-ranging fields, some of which may even be surprising, but they all show Anzaldúa's range and breadth of influence. The interdisciplinary contents of this journal encompass education, sociology, creative writing, law, biology, and speculative studies. The diverse range of contributions, and even more so, the contributors themselves, show Anzaldúa's legacy and impact in academia and beyond.

We have been conditioned throughout our lives to suppress our own stories, to believe that they are not of value. This edition represents triumph over that mental colonization. We have learned to overcome. As a graduate student trusted with editing this volume, I faced mental, physical and spiritual trials while helping bring this to completion. I learned to expand my understandings of myself and the work I reviewed, realizing how Anzaldúa's legacy forces us to re-write what is seen as valid in the academy and empowers us to lay claim to our own voices as contributors to this world. I am infinitely grateful for being entrusted with this responsibility to help share our stories, the beginnings and continuations of our own legacies. After all, if we are not telling our own stories intentionally, then no one else will. This journal would not have been possible without the Center for Mexican American Studies and its prioritization of supporting these urgent and important works. I would also like to thank the people who served as peer reviewers for this issue and everyone else who contributed their time.

For some time, we did hide beneath the shadows; still, parts of our past were practiced in our homes and continued to live on through our families. *Borderlands* has provided many of us with the tools necessary to reclaim our true histories and cultures and our rightful space within greater society to say that we are here, we have always been here and we are not going anywhere. Anzaldúa asks to be met halfway, but the true legacy of her text is the confidence she has planted within each nepantlera who no longer needs outside validation or affirmation from non-mestizxs. The heridas abiertas, though utterly painful, fuel us to keep going and to explore, dismantle and even embrace the borders we come across, and to curate new forms of knowing (Anzaldúa 4).

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2.Anzaldúa, Gloria. Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality.
3.Edited by Analouise Keating, Duke University Press, 2015.
4.Anzaldúa, Gloria. The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader. Edited by Analouise Keating, Duke University Press, 2009.

Nuestra Gloria: The Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Publication of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

By Stephanie Alvarez, Amanda Tovar, and Mariana Alessandri

2017 was a significant year in Chicanx, queer, feminist, and American literary history, as it marked the 30th anniversary of the publication of Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza. One of the most influential books of the twentieth century, Borderlands brings forth nuanced concepts of borders and the importance of the identities shaped by them—physical, cultural, or otherwise. The book has paved the way for exploration and healing for many Chicanxs, people of color, individuals of all gender identities and sexual preferences, and everyone who has proximity to any type of border. Recognizing how Borderlands grounds a wide range of people, the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) saw it fitting to celebrate the life and work of Gloria Anzaldúa in a special way. Annually, CMAS holds a celebration of Anzaldúa, El Retorno, organized by Professor of Creative Writing and Associate Director of CMAS Emmy Pérez. However, CMAS dedicated the entire academic school year of 2017-2018 to Anzaldúa—specifically to Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, for the campus and larger Rio Grande Valley community—with a series we titled "Nuestra Gloria: CMAS Celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Publication of Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza."

Rather than a theory-laden essay, detailing the work around that series puts into practice what Anzaldua asked us to do throughout her work. "Change requires more than words on a page—it takes perseverance, creative ingenuity, and acts of love." In many ways, Anzaldúa left us with a monumental encargo as academics to move beyond theory to "do work that matters. Vale la pena." So, in 2017 we would not only display Anzaldúa to the University, but we would also preserve the work of the mujeres involved in the archives, so that it will not disappear. We have chosen to detail several acts of love meant to celebrate and honor the work of Anzaldúa, documenting the efforts of a group of women faculty and students on the UTRGV campus. The praxis was driven by our love, respect and admiration of Gloria's work, and it is important to celebrate the often-challenging task of putting her words into action.

In the summer of 2017, a group of faculty and staff from UTRGV affiliated with the Mexican American Studies program, the newly formed B3 Institute (Bilingual, Bicultural and Biliterate), and the Center for Mexican American Studies traveled to Mexico City to engage in meaningful conversations about what being a B3 university meant and to prompt a deeper understanding of Mexican and specifically indigenous Mexican history. This was not unlike much of the processes Anzaldúa herself had undertaken to engage in her own writings, such as her 1992 visit to the opening of the museum exhibition "Aztec: The World of Moctezuma." In fact, Anzaldúa's writings guided us and our discussions in Mexico City. Our process

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1 Gloria E. Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, eds., This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 574.

2 Gloria Anzaldúa, Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality, ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 22.

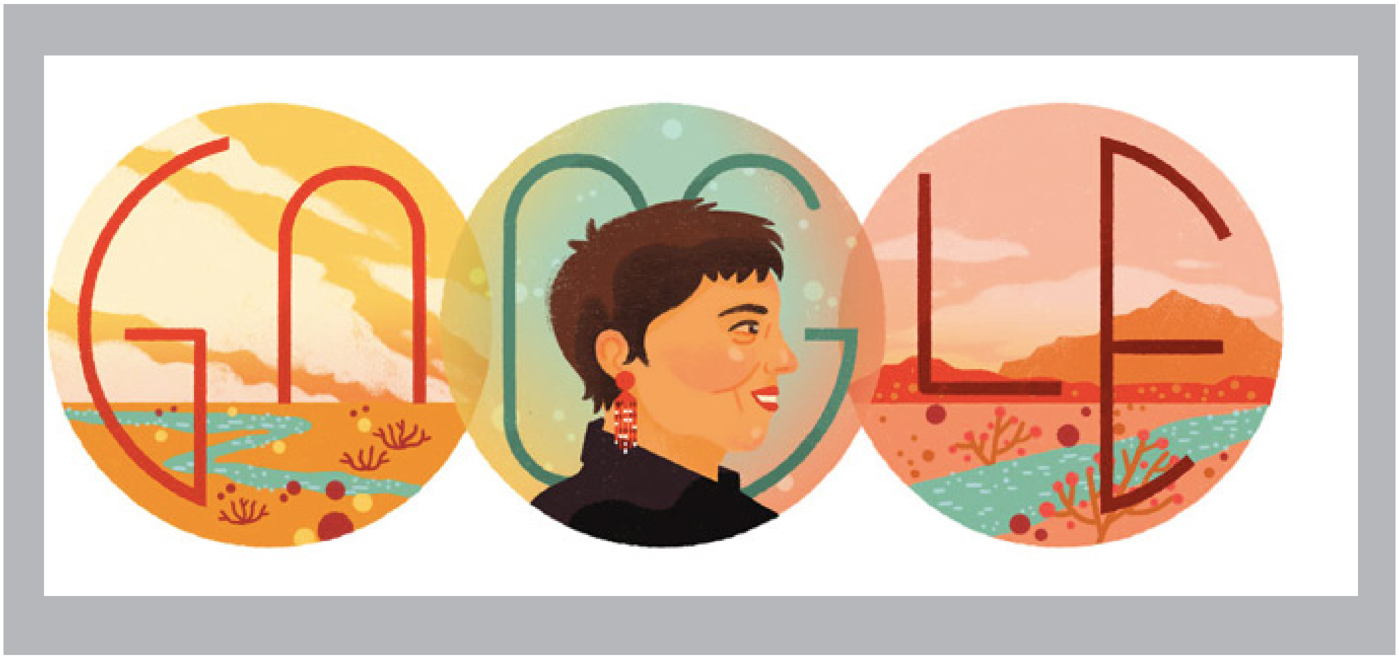
3 Ibid., 22.

of collaboration and introspection led us to conceive of CMAS celebrating the 30th anniversary of Anzaldúa's groundbreaking Borderlands/La Frontera The New Mestiza at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley for the entire academic year. The consensus to celebrate Anzaldúa came at a time when many of us who were on the trip were experiencing extreme fatigue from dealing with the relentless and dehumanizing rhetoric and policy by the newly elected president of the United States, Donald Trump. We wanted to optimize the celebration to utilize Anzaldúa's theory autohistoria-teoria to tell our own stories and gain better control over the distorted Border narratives emerging from the White House. We hoped the events would rejuvenate our community as well as affirm community members in meaningful ways.

Additionally, we proposed that the year-long celebration not only be dedicated to Anzaldúa's first book, but that it take place at UTRGV, the legacy institution of Anzaldúa's alma mater. She graduated from Pan American College in in 1968, writing about it in "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." Moreover, we live in Anzaldúa's "Valle," the place she felt she had to leave, for which she felt a "fear of going home." We needed to showcase that the region that once rejected her is now home to individuals who appreciate her and her contributions, not just to academia, but to the community. We didn't owe the celebration just to her; we owed it to the students y la gente del Valle. We wanted to give them a notion of who Anzaldúa was, an inkling of her genius, and a sense of pride in knowing that one of the most important writers of the twentieth century was from here, from El Valle. Even today, not all literature professors teach Anzaldúa, and many students leave the university never having read a test by Anzaldúa.

¡Feliz Cumpleaños, Gloria!

September 26, 2017: ¡Feliz Cumpleaños, Gloria! was a celebration held during the university's activity hour. Our students wished to hold this party not just to honor Anzaldúa, but also to discuss the impact reading her work had on them. With birthday cake and all, la plática ensued, and to our surprise, some of Anzaldúa's relatives were also in attendance. They expressed gratitude that we were engaged with Anzaldúa's work, lauding in particular the efforts the youth were making to honor it. Anzaldúa's birthday would not just be



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4 Gloria Anzaldúa, Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro, 137.
5 Ibid., 41.

marked with our own celebration, but Google's doodle for the day featured Anzaldúa to celebrate what would have been her 75th birthday. Anzaldúa's fans throughout the Valley, nation, and world shared their alegría through social media, email, and private messages. It was as if Anzaldúa's time had finally come, and that international platform so many knew she deserved had come to fruition. The atmosphere on campus among those involved in Mexican American Studies was one of pure joy. Students who had never heard of Anzaldúa were beginning to realize how far her fame spread.

The Obscurities of Cenote Writing: The Life and Work of Gloria Anzaldúa with Aída Hurtado

For our premier event of *Nuestra Gloria*, we called upon beloved Valley native, friend of Anzaldúa, renowned Anzaldúan scholar, and comadre of our CMAS familia, Aída Hurtado. Hurtado, who earned her Bachelor's degree at Pan American College during the Chicanx Civil Rights movement, has always shown CMAS a tremendous amount of generosity. Knowing our limited funding, our student population, and the sacrifices made by our faculty, Hurtado eagerly accepted our invitation to join our celebration as the keynote speaker. Hurtado's talk "The Obscurities of Cenote Writing: The Life and Work of Gloria Anzaldúa" spoke to the ways in which the Valley influenced Anzaldúa and how she sees so much beauty in the Valley that so many take for granted. CMAS often is the recipient of the great generosity of community members, alumni and those associated with Mexican American Studies who appreciate that UTRGV is the legacy institution of Anzaldúa's alma mater, Pan American College, and that the Valley was her homeland. Moreover, they appreciate that many people, especially mujeres, have made sacrifices so that Mexican American Studies and CMAS could become realities at UTRGV.

Depiction and Dedication

Along with the kickoff event, it was critical to set the tone of our year-long celebration with a carefully chosen title and graphic design. Collectively, CMAS faculty, students and staff titled the celebration "Nuestra Gloria: CMAS Celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Publication of Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza." Along with the title of the event, we chose a graphic design that would accompany all of our event promotions. We felt compelled to reach out and ask CMAS faculty affiliate and renowned Chicana artist Celeste De Luna for her assistance in allowing us to use one of her Anzaldúa relief prints. Just as both De Luna and Hurtado demonstrated great generosity, Mexican American Studies alumnus Arnulfo Segovia also donated his time and talent as a graphic designer to create a poster for our year-long celebration incorporating De Luna's image that could be used throughout the year. In the end, the love and generosity of all for Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La frontera and el Valle came to fruition and was on display in both our design and kickoff event. Hurtado mentioned in her talk, "Sure, people are holding events to celebrate the 30th anniversary, but only you all are celebrating her all year! That's love. You all are the ones making her an icon."

Ballet Nepantla: Dancing Beyond Borders

> *CMAS had the honor and privilege of hosting New York*
> *City's Ballet Nepantla on November 29, 2017, at Edinburg*

North High School. Ballet Nepantla was founded by Valley native Andrea Guajardo and co-founded by Martín Rodríguez with the intent of merging both of their backgrounds in dance—Andrea in classical ballet

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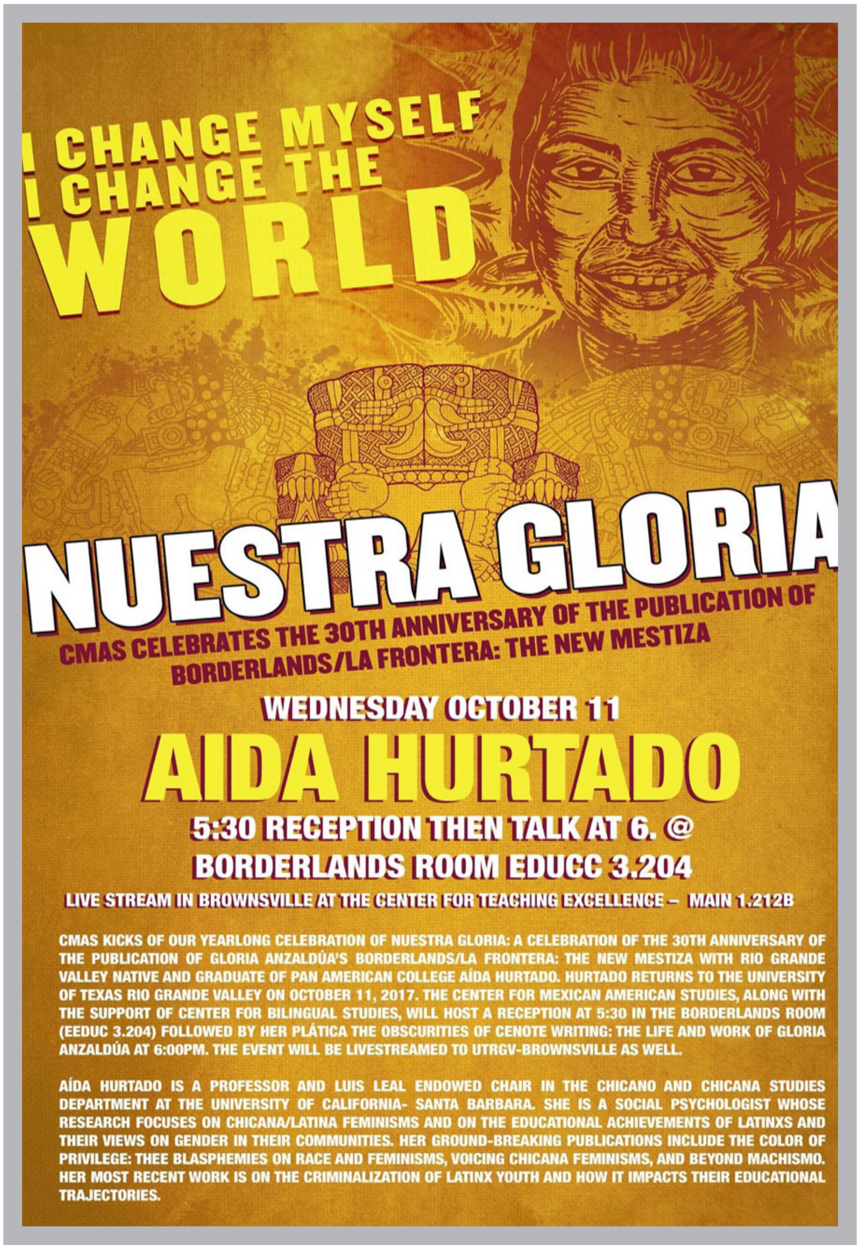
6 "About Ballet Nepantla," Ballet Nepantla, accessed January 5, 2019, https://www.balletnepantla.com/about and contemporary dance and Martín in traditional Mexican folklórico. This fusion of traditions embodies Anzaldúa's theory of Nepantla, an in-betweenness or overlap. They explore "the in-between-ness of cultures within the realm of dance, harmonizing contemporary ballet with traditional Mexican dance." Ballet Nepantla bears their name in honor of Anzaldúa.

Nuestra Gloria Graduate Research Symposium

During the Fall 2017 semester, Dr. Stephanie Alvarez taught Chicanx Research Methodologies, a required graduate course for the Master of Arts in Mexican American Studies. Alvarez set out to align the course with the yearlong celebration and assigned Anzaldúa's Luz en lo Oscuro and Borderlands as the fundamental texts for the class. Gloria Anzaldúa's writing and quest for healing the traumas she endured fueled the class discussions once students realized they had similar experiences to those of Anzaldúa, ultimately prompting the theme of research the students were to conduct in the course—healing and social justice in the Borderlands. Alvarez's work is always done with the intention of shifting conventional research methods, topics and narratives in hopes of positively impacting her students and their communities. This research methods course was no exception. Her students chose research topics such as "Comadriando: Reflecting on Patriarchy, Colonialism and Healing," for which students researched their relationships with each other and the effective ways they utilize the concept of chisme as a form of vulnerable and healing communication. Other topics included their relationships with their families, the correlation between sexual assault and colonialism, and "Educación, Voz, y Liberación" for which students researched the long-standing racism that exists in Texas public institutions and has informed their experiences while attending Texas public schools, and the difficulties of education while a migrant student. The students were so proud of their work, they collectively decided to present their research at a graduate symposium which was free and openly accessible to the public.



NUESTRA GLORIA

CMAS CELEBRATES THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF BORDERLANDS/LA FRONTERA: THE NEW MESTIZA

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 11

AIDA HURTADO

5:30 RECEPTION THEN TALK AT 6. @
BORDERLANDS ROOM EDUCC 3.204

LIVE STREAM IN BROWNSVILLE AT THE CENTER FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE – MAIN 1.212B

CMAS KICKS OF OUR YEARLONG CELEBRATION OF NUESTRA GLORIA: A CELEBRATION OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF GLORIA ANZALDÚA'S BORDERLANDS/LA FRONTERA: THE NEW MESTIZA WITH RIO GRANDE VALLEY NATIVE AND GRADUATE OF PAN AMERICAN COLLEGE AÍDA HURTADO. HURTADO RETURNS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY ON OCTOBER 11, 2017. THE CENTER FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, ALONG WITH THE SUPPORT OF CENTER FOR BILINGUAL STUDIES, WILL HOST A RECEPTION AT 5:30 IN THE BORDERLANDS ROOM (EEDUC 3.204) FOLLOWED BY HER PLÁTICA THE OBSCURITIES OF CENOTE WRITING: THE LIFE AND WORK OF GLORIA ANZALDÚA AT 6:00PM. THE EVENT WILL BE LIVESTREAMED TO UTRGV-BROWNSVILLE AS WELL.

AÍDA HURTADO IS A PROFESSOR AND LUIS LEAL ENDOWED CHAIR IN THE CHICANO AND CHICANA STUDIES DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA- SANTA BARBARA. SHE IS A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST WHOSE RESEARCH FOCUSES ON CHICANA/LATINA FEMINISMS AND ON THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF LATINXS AND THEIR VIEWS ON GENDER IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. HER GROUND-BREAKING PUBLICATIONS INCLUDE THE COLOR OF PRIVILEGE: THEE BLASPHEMIES ON RACE AND FEMINISMS, VOICING CHICANA FEMINISMS, AND BEYOND MACHISMO. HER MOST RECENT WORK IS ON THE CRIMINALIZATION OF LATINX YOUTH AND HOW IT IMPACTS THEIR EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORIES.

This symposium was held on December 8, 2017 and was titled "Healing & Social Justice in the Borderlands Research Symposium." This was also part of "Nuestra Gloria: CMAS Celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Publication of Borderlands/La Frontera." Students invited their friends, families, and partners to watch and engage with the presented research. Each student brought a food dish or drink to share and listened intently to one another's presentations. The room was overflowing with community members y familia. Alvarez's intentions of shifting customary research methods were actualized when the majority of her students decided to take their research a step forward and transition it to self and community-based healing simultaneously – this is parallel with Anzaldúa's work and is often seen the antithesis of traditional academic work. Several students turned their research papers into their master's theses, others submitted their work for publications, and some presented their work at conferences across the country.

Poetry as Conocimiento: What We Learn from the Poetics of Anzaldúan Theory with Lauren Espinoza

Poet Lauren Espinoza, the first student at UTPA/UTRGV to receive a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Mexican American Studies, also came to campus to deliver a talk on Anzaldúa titled "Poetry as Conocimiento: What We Learn from the Poetics of Anzaldúan Theory" on January 25, 2018. The presentation was profound, not just because it meant Lauren's own "retorno," but also because she spoke of Anzaldúa's poetry and its influence on her own. This moment was particularly impactful as Espinoza herself, an award-winning poet and recent recipient of an MFA from Arizona State University (ASU) & current PhD Candidate at ASU, embodied a full circle moment as she was standing in the classroom talking to students demonstrating that success in the academy can be achieved for those from el Valle. Lauren's mother recorded the entire event as Lauren spoke of Anzaldúa, Anzaldúa's lessons and what Anzaldúa had to teach poets. After the formal presentation, Lauren joined us at CMAS for lunch and a plática with a handful of graduate students to discuss what it was like to get a PhD, to review the application process, and to offer advice.

Anzaldúa Plática Marathon

On January 26, 2018, CMAS held an Anzaldúa Plática Marathon during the university's annual FESTIBA; Festival of Books and Art. This event was initiated in 2017 by then Interim CMAS Director Professor Emmy Pérez. Faculty and students were invited to come in and out all day long to share their research, creative work, testimonies or stories of 10 minutes about Anzaldúa. In scheduled talks from 9am-4pm, presenters and participants would enjoy breakfast tacos and beverages as 11 presentations were made on topics ranging from "Gloria Anzaldúa's Interest in Philosophy," as discussed by Dr. Mariana Alessandri, to "The Shadow Beast Inside Me," shared by Angelica González. Professors and students participated from the colleges of Education and Liberal Arts, from five departments consisting of Philosophy, Mexican American Studies, Bilingual and Literacy Studies, and University Studies.

Unfolding UTRGV Students with Dr. Mariana Alessandri

Raheleh Filsoofi of UTRGV's art department curated and directed a multi-location, multi-week international art exhibit spanning from the end of January through March of 2018. The exhibit was called "Fold: Art, Metaphor, and Practice." It included art from thirteen diverse female artists and seven scholars from different colleges across the university. The concept of "Fold" was inspired by philosopher Gilles Deleuze, and the artists and scholars were asked to interpret it for themselves. On February 27, Dr. Mariana Alessandri presented a lecture interpreting the concept "Fold" in the context of UTRGV itself. The title of her lecture was

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7 Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), chapter 5.
8 Ibid., 75.

"Unfolding UTRGV Students." It was a presentation on Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of "linguistic terrorism"; since Alessandri is an affiliate faculty with Mexican American Studies, she wanted to celebrate Anzaldúa's life and work especially during this year, the 30th anniversary of the publication of Borderlands/La Frontera.

In Alessandri's lecture, she divided the history of linguistic terrorism into three time periods: the first was in the 1960's and 70's, when Anzaldúa was attending English-only schools in South Texas; the second spanned the 1980s and 90s, when Ebonics was coming under criticism in California, and then the 2000s-2018, UTRGV having been established as a bilingual University in 2015. Alessandri traced the history of students like Anzaldúa who were made to "fold" their language deep inside themselves to avoid corporal and verbal punishment. Grandparents of current UTRGV students often have had an experience with linguistic terrorism like Anzaldúa's. Most learned quickly that success meant forgetting Spanish. Anzaldúa recounts that in her career at Pan American University, she was forced to take two speech-correction classes five days a week for two semesters for no credit with the intention of getting rid of her accent. Anzaldúa refused to fold—she kept her language and her accent, but she is one of few. In Borderlands/la frontera, Anzaldúa quotes Ray Gwyn Smith who asked: "who is to say that robbing a people of its language is less violent than war?"

Next came the experience of the students of that linguistically robbed generation. Most of their parents did not teach them in Spanish, having learned that lesson the hard way. This resulted in the parents of current RGV students, some of whom also work as teachers in RGV public schools, not feeling very comfortable with Spanish. Their children who now sit in the classrooms at UTRGV often feel very ashamed of their level of Spanish and think this lack of fluency is their fault. Some blame their parents for not teaching them, but it reality, neither is to blame. Anzaldúa articulated this clearly in Borderlands/la frontera:

By the end of this century Spanish speakers will comprise the biggest minority group in the U.S., a country where students in high schools and colleges are encouraged to take French classes, because French is considered more "cultured." By the end of this century, English and not Spanish will be the mother tongue of most Chicanos and Latinos.

Anzaldúa added that the pain of the rejection of Spanish in favor of English and French is directly related to the identity of those students. She wrote: "ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity." Alessandri suggested that helping UTRGV students linguistically unfold is a difficult and often painful process, since their initial folding was an attempt to find relief from linguistic shame.

Now that UTRGV explicitly aims to be bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate, it creates a difficult situation for the grandchildren on those in Anzaldúa's generation who folded Spanish away so deeply that their grandchildren have no access to it. Many UTRGV students either don't know Spanish or have been told that their Spanish is bad. Recent arrivals to the U.S. from Mexico will fare better in bilingual classes because they have not had to fold their language away. Alessandri ended her talk by suggesting to all faculty present that they have a responsibility to reckon with the linguistic terrorism of the University in which they teach.

Fuerza del Valle: Women Workers at the Frontline

As part of our Nuestra Gloria celebration, CMAS hosted the mujeres from Fuerza del Valle (Fuerza) on March 29, 2018, to share their role as women at the frontline of the development of the Fuerza del Valle Workers' Center. It was important for us not only to recognize their efforts, struggles, and the resiliency of these women, but also to uplift and support them. Fuerza exists to protect workers from workplace theft and mistreatment in the Rio Grande Valley and beyond. Fuerza was birthed as a project by the Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network's Jobs Working Group and later developed into Fuerza. The community effort is supported by and housed in the offices of the Texas Civil Rights Project. Fuerza reaches communities across

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9 Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands, 81.

10 Ibid.

11 "Mission & History," Fuerza Del Valle, accessed January 5, 2019, http://fuerzadelvalle.org/about/missionhistory/)

the entire Rio Grande Valley and has recovered approximately $350,000 dollars in unpaid wages for workers. Las mujeres shared information from their leadership as part of the research team that produced the groundbreaking study "Vivir el las sombras: Las trabajadores del hogar latinas en la región fronteriza Texas-México."

The Gloria Anzaldúa Speaker Series with AnaLouise Keating

Each year, the Department of Philosophy invites speakers to present as part of "The Gloria Anzaldúa Speaker Series," initiated in 2008 and named for Anzaldúa to bring more recognition to the Valley native as a philosopher. CMAS has been collaborating with the Philosophy Department for the last 8 years to co-sponsor the event. The speakers connected to the series do not always speak about Anzaldúa, her theories, or work, but connect in some way to her philosophy to their work. However, for the purpose of this year, coordinator of the series and associate professor of Philosophy, Cynthia Paccacerqua agreed to focus on Anzaldúa specifically.

Together with Associate Professor of Mexican American Studies and Director of the Mexican American Studies Cinthya Saavedra, the series invited AnaLouise Keating to deliver the annual address on April 8, 2018. Keating's presentation was titled "Radical Contributions to 21st-Century Thought," in which she highlighted several of Anzaldúa's theories. In addition, Keating visited the classes of Paccacerqua and Saavedra. Paccacerqua was teaching a course on Chicana/Latina feminism, and Saavedra was teaching a course specifically on Gloria Anzaldúa. Both courses were mixed undergraduate/graduate courses and taught on the same day and time to allow the classes to interact with one another on occasion. These courses were designed to coincide with CMAS' year-long celebration.

Unleashing the Wild Tongue

"Unleashing the Wild Tongue" began as a means of completing an assignment by MAS students Amanda Lee Tovar, Angie González, and Yajaira Rivera in a graduate course on Decolonial Theory taught by associate professor of Mexican American Studies and Director of CMAS, Stephanie Alvarez. Students were asked to develop decolonial pathways that would allow a community to engage in a deconstruction of cultural norms and that would be sustainable. The three mujeres decided to create lesson plans around Anzaldúa's children's book "Prietita y La Llorona" that they would also put online in order to make accessible for teachers anywhere. The lesson plans include reading the book aloud bilingually, not fully in English or Spanish, but rather one page in English and the next page in Spanish, to honor the Tex-Mex background. With the help of David Bowles, assistant professor of Literature and Culture, the mujeres identified words of Nahuatl origin in the text for teachers to point out to the children. The purpose of these linguistic exercises s to demonstrate to the students just how many valuable linguistic assets they have at their disposal even if they have not been aware of it. After the reading, the mujeres suggest a discussion about Anzaldúa's interpretation of La Llorona which differs from the villainous one they have learned throughout their lives. Next, tapping into creative interpretation, the children are tasked to imagine their own Llorona collectively in groups visually and are given large sticky notes, markers and crayons. The second component of the lesson was the development of a trilingual coloring book. This trilingual coloring book of various images has the titles of the objects in English, Spanish, and Nahuatl. The coloring book allows students to take home and share with their families the recovered language and cultural knowledge that otherwise may remain solely in the classroom.

In April 2018, Amanda Lee Tovar took the assignment out of the classroom and made it a part of the year-long celebration. Tovar led two different Center for Mexican American Studies Presents Bilingual Story Hour sessions at Reed-Mock Elementary in Pharr San Juan Alamo ISD and used the lesson plans she

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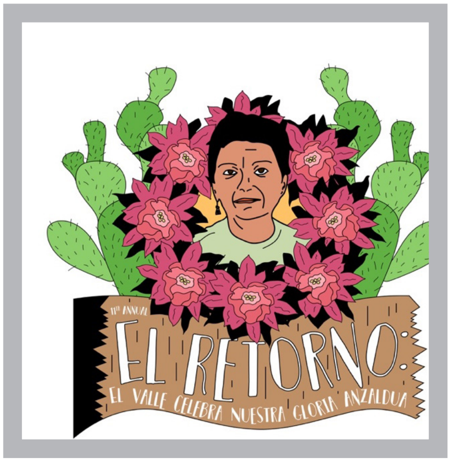
1. Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands, 81.

2. UTRGV El Retorno (UTRGV), accessed January 5, 2019, https://www.utrgv.edu/cmas/nuestragloria/retorno/index.htm created. During Tovar's lesson, she emphasized to the children how intelligent they were for knowing not just English and Spanish, but also Tex-Mex and Nahuatl as they knew most of the Nahuatl words in the "Prietita y La Llorona." In speaking about the experience of delivering the lessons, Tovar revealed that "it was one of the best experiences of my life. Watching their faces light up as we told them see how smart you are, you know three languages! Seeing them freely talk about remedies used at home like barridas, el huevo, hierbas and consulting curanderas with huge smiles on their face felt amazing." The second graders worked together and developed their own Lloronas which included traditionally frightening Lloronas but also other interpretations such as a Pizza Llorona who delivers pizza to hungry children.


11th Annual
EL RETORNO:
EL VALLE CELEBRA NUESTRA GLORIA ANZALDÚA

Anzaldúa wrote that the way to truly hurt her was to speak badly of her language. So much of her identity was wrapped up in her language, and she wrote that until she could fully accept her language and be accepted for it, she could not take pride in herself. Anzaldúa's sensitivity to language rings true today for children living in the Borderlands whose language and culture are often hurt or disregarded; their self-image becomes distorted, and they internalize self-hatred. These lessons were essential for the young students, as they illuminated their abundant knowledge and affirmed their cultural-linguistic identities.

11th Annual El Retorno: El Valle Celebra Nuestra Gloria with Dr. María Herrera-Sobek

The 11th El Retorno: El Valle Celebra Nuestra Gloria closed out our yearlong celebration of Gloria Anzaldúa. Founded by Emmy Perez, El Retorno started in 2008 in response to Río Grande Valley grassroots community organizations such as the Gloria Anzaldúa Legacy Project as well as the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa based in San Antonio. The annual event includes a pilgrimage to Anzaldúa's burial site in Hargill, TX. Because this event was in the same academic school year as our year-long celebration, we decided to dedicate this El Retorno to the anniversary of Borderlands, and it had one of the biggest attendances to date. Dr. María Herrera-Sobek, professor of Chican@ Studies and Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity Equity and Academic Policy at UC Santa Barbara was the keynote speaker who gave a talk titled "Gloria Anzaldúa and the Rio Grande Valley: Our Parallel Lives, Convergent Scholarship, and Divergent Life Experiences." That morning of May 16th, we met community members from the Valley and El Mundo Zurdo conference attendees at Valle de la Paz Cemetery in Hargill for an opening ceremony conducted by local poets. Participants were invited to speak about why they were in attendance, and very moving testimonios followed. The symposium included short presentations by students, community members, activists and artists who are engaged in work which is in some way directly inspired by Anzaldúa's writing, teachings, and legacy. We were fortunate to have some of Anzaldúa's family members in attendance, along with performances by Conjunto Los Cardenales de Roma High School, an incredible conjunto band from Roma, TX.

Conclusion

Finally, this journal creates another extension of Anzaldúa's legacy. Throughout the course of the year-long celebration, it became overwhelmingly clear that another effort was needed to round out the historical moment of the 30th anniversary of Borderlands. That effort required documentation of the work and participation in this journal. The Río Bravo journal has gone through several changes throughout its history and now goes through yet another. It provides not only a dedication to Anzaldúa but a reassociation with the community it is meant to serve and represent.

The influence of Anzaldúa across our lives is deep and intricate, manifesting in ways that are not always obvious. The narrative that often surrounds the life and work of Gloria Anzaldúa is that El Valle does not know or care about Gloria Anzaldúa, but we hosted these events to publicly celebrate and honor Anzaldúa's legacy. The totality of these events represents a direct result of more than a decade of individual and collective efforts to preserve and uplift Anzaldúa's significance not just in the Valley, but in our community. These moments are historical and a long time coming. It was an honor to see so many people come together for the year-long celebration of the life and work of Anzaldúa. Our hope is that the intensity and capacity for holding events like these continues to grow and be celebrated. El Valle has been facilitating events that surround Gloria Anzaldúa and her legacy for years and will continue to do so for many years to come.

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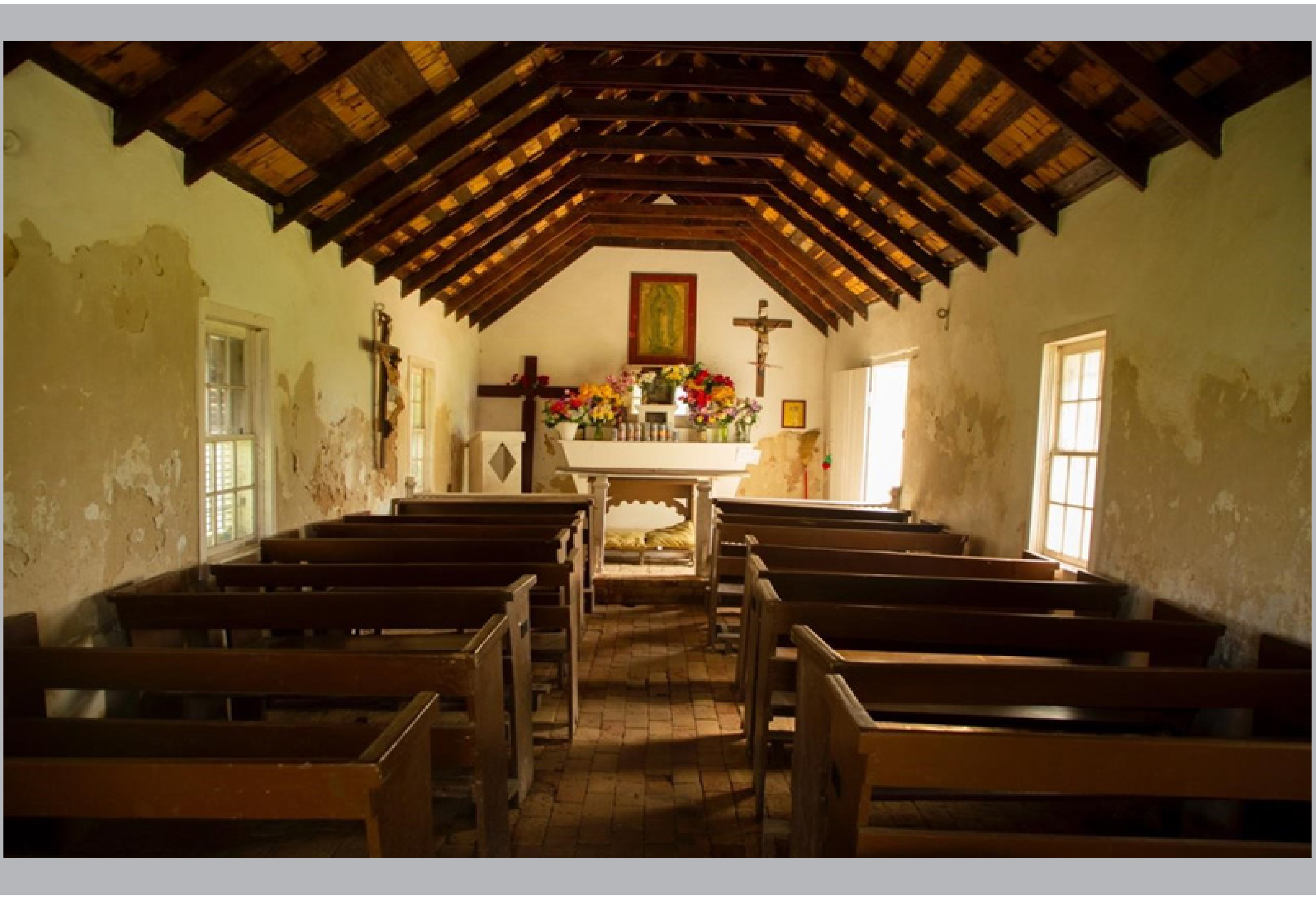
La Lomita Chapel, Mission, Tx.



Photograph by Arnulfo Daniel Segovia

Zaida del Rio, 1989

A Wild Tongue Writes Back: Replying to Gloria Anzaldúa's "Speaking in Tongues"

Rachel Romero

Using a combination of transgressive methodologies, auto-historia/auto-ethnography, reflective narrative, prose and poetic transcription, I celebrate the opportunity to write back to Gloria Anzaldúa's Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers. In my response to Gloria, I explore a number of personal traumas including my anxiety and struggle to write for an academic audience, my internalization of whiteness as a Cuban immigrant, and my deep desire to find Voice and a community of Women of Color writers.

In solidarity with the #CiteWomenofColor movement, I am intentionally only making references to the Women of Color writers who have influenced my journey to find a voice. My crossing from where I was before, to where I find myself now—a transformation that began during the last two years since I first met Gloria—has been fueled by the dreaming and writings of these women. Throughout my awakening, these women represented an imagined community of Women of Color writers. The italicized words in this text come directly from Speaking in Tongues. I weave Anzaldúa's words with mine because her words have wrapped me like a shawl and shielded when I needed comfort. I want for my words to bleed into hers, mesh with hers, be with hers—my refuge.

February 22, 2019
Querida Gloria,

Gracias por escribirme. Your letter has moved me deeply and inspired a revolution within. I read your words, and no palabras vibrate louder, why does writing seem so unnatural for me? I'll do anything to postpone it—empty the trash, answer the telephone. Getting up to light incense, to put a record on, to go for a walk—anything just to put off the writing.

Amiga. Compañera. The daily struggle to put things on paper strangles my breathing and chokes my words. Unlike the powerful serpents of your writings the creature I continue to confront wraps around my throat and cuts off my signing, even though I have so much to say. At times, when in my mind I rehearse the words I want to carve out, the self-doubter appears from the shadows and says: too subjective, too much poesía y pasión. So I pull myself out from esos sueños and reject the poetry, the long syntax, and the voice that comes most intuitively to me—the *tongues like the outcast and the insane.*

Esta es mi historia abreviada: at the age of thirteen mi hermana and I moved from Cuba to the U.S. to be reunited with our dad after a traumatic separation that lasted a little over three years. My name, spelled R-A-C-H-E-L and pronounced as *Rachelle*, easily crossed over to be appropriated as Rachel, which no English-speaking person has difficulty saying. I have dark hair, brown eyes, and skin light enough to be perceived as white-passing. Despite that my last name—Romero—bleeds non-Anglo heritage and the accent I once tried so hard to camouflage often elicits questions about where I am from, most of my peers and mentors are white Americans and my introduction to Women of Color writers has come late in my professional development. Unlike you, Gloria, I passively adopted *the esoteric bullshit and pseudo-intellectualizing that school brainwashed into my writing*.

En parte esto pasó because when we moved from Cuba, mi papá—a single dad—was adamant that our family live in Texas, instead of Miami where many of our relatives and friends reside. The reason was simple. In his most loving attempt to secure for us the promised dream, my dad believed that guaranteed success in this country would require full immersion into the "American" culture. As a result, assimilation in our home was received as aspiration, and internalizing whiteness became the model. Y así, in less time than expected, Massiel y yo were already speaking "perfect English," and dating americanos. This is when I started bleaching my dark hair to blonde; and first began to experience *the rip-off of my native tongue*.

Continué así, en lo que tú llamas nepantla. I, the included/outsider, roaming through books, conversations, theory and academic writing, as me and the stranger, together in one. Then, just a couple of years ago, my sister-in-law Aeriel—a Korean-adoptee, scholar, mother and hero, introduced me to your writings. The works of Crenshaw, Davis, and Lorde followed. Reading la obra of radical Women of Color spun the realization, that like chopped-off limbs, my experiences, career, and personal growth will continue to be amputated if I remain without a community of others, who like me, understand our culture's systemic oppression isn't carved for us to express our voices—our loud, poetic, emotion-filled, raw, truth-telling voices, *which we women of color have come to think as other—the dark, the feminine.*

Tu carta/your letter, como un bravo estallo de luz, filled my belly with fire and painted an X to signal, start here. I hold on to your words fiercely: *throw away abstraction and the academic learning, the rules, the map and compass. Feel your way without blinders. To touch more people, the personal realities and the social must be evoked—not through rhetoric but through blood and pus and sweat.*

Y así empezé a poner Coyolxauhqui back together. By (re)membering the first time I raised a closed fist over my head, and screamed Viva la Revolución! was before my life in this new life. By (re)membering that in that prior life, sweat, café y azúcar, come as one. (Re)membering meaning to (re)call, that my favorite painting—

the one I keep in hiding—was created by la pintora Cubana, Zaida del Rio. In the portrait, a group of naked women with cabezas of talking birds dance around a bed. This painting belonged to my parents and was one of the only things the government allowed us to bring from Cuba, when Massiel and I left. Now I (re)embrace the painting as my so-yearned community of women—animal-like and bare, singing, dancing; entresueños. To (re)member, to (re)collect, that I already was a poet in my previous life. Sitting on my mother's lap before I knew how to write dictating to her mis poemas. Con pluma y papel, her sweet hand would transcribe my words between smiles. Tienes toda la razón Gloria, *the danger in writing is not fusing our personal experience and world view with the social reality we live in, with our inner life, our history, our economics, and our vision.*

Ya comienzo a entender, I begin to understand the paralyzing anxiety and extreme sadness that have kept me company all these years when I sit to write. How can there be no consequences for my poetic-repression all these years? The trauma from the cutting off of my wild tongue. How can there be no effects from internalizing la voz of the other who others me? How can I walk feeling whole, si mi soul, está en pieces? Como dice Lorde, poetry is not a luxury; poetry is a necessity of our existence. Como dices tú, *the world I create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me.*

Esplendor.

Ahora. Aquí. Despierta. Writing feels dangerous. I consider the potential ramifications of this letter. The questions. The judgement. But I cannot continue functioning in two separate halves. I cannot continue the mutilation, the before and the after. The duality of voice—la que siento y la que pienso. Yo soy una, deliberately wandering in the hyphen. Neither here nor there, but everywhere. Querida Gloria, ya no puedo stop speaking in tongues, stop writing left-handed.

Entoces, recivo tu wisdom and commit. To write with my eyes like painters, with my ears like musicians, with my feet like dancers. I am the truthsayer with quill and torch. Writing with my tongues of fire. I cannot let the pen banish me from myself. I cannot let the ink coagulate in my pens, nor let the censor snuff out the spark, nor the gags muffle my voice. I will put my shit on the paper. I will not fake it, and will try to sell it for a handclap or my name in print.

Love,

Rachel

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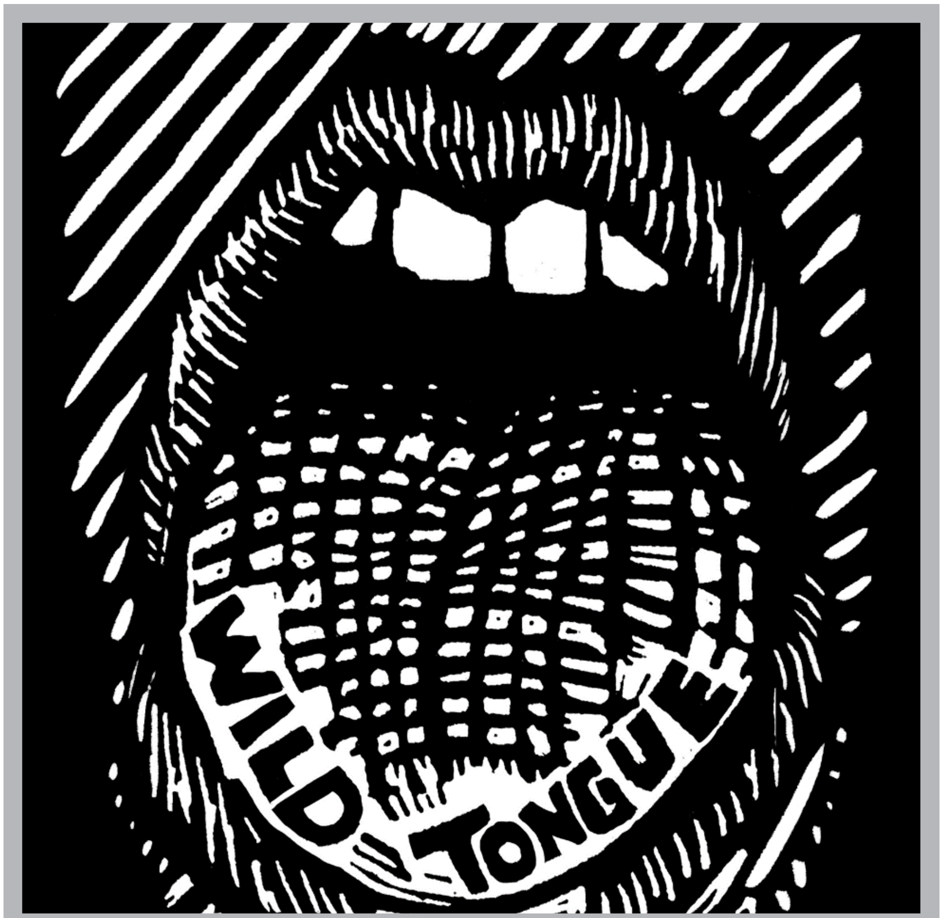

Fig. 1: The cover art for *Wild Tongue*, a 2018 compilation album, was contributed by visual artist Celeste de Luna. A portion of a larger piece, *Lotería Nepatla*, the cover draws attention to a local legacy of creative risk, critical necessity, and decolonial thought.

"*Wild Tongue*: A New Record of Rio Grande Valley Expression"

Jonathan Leal

"Wild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out."
– Gloria Anzaldúa

For thirty years now, Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La Frontera has helped scores of people discover themselves through care and contradiction—through art that is culturally specific, vulnerable, opaque, and hybrid, reliant on intersecting forms, layered genres, multiple languages, and clashing registers. The present anniversary of Anzaldúa's book, arriving amidst absurdist headlines and daily heartbreaks, has spurred many to reflect on the increasingly surreal realities of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands: increased militarization and denigrating media coverage, increased displacement and hostile policies, routine dehumanizations and offensive caricatures, neglectful representatives and still-ailing constituencies. Our present tense is an unequal distribution of fear, its realities at once new and inherited, unforeseen and unsurprising: the gnarled legacy of colonial expansion. And as much as this present continues to overwhelm, it also, as Wild Tongue attests, is spurring many Valley natives to respond with forward-looking, reparative art.

Wild Tongue, a compilation record released on Bandcamp on June 1, 2018, emerged from the same soil and spirit as Anzaldúa's text: the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). A polyphonic collection of stories, reflections, and testimonios produced by Charlie Vela and contributed by nine active bands—Epi and Friends, Carmen Fría, DeZorah, Twin Tribes, Matt and the Herdsmen, Maria D'Luz, Pinky Swear, Jesika, and Arcanedisplay—the album articulates different yet complementary relationships to a complex region. Its braided goals: to amplify, excavate, and reimagine.

In this brief essay, adapted from the liner notes I wrote for the album's release, I aim to provide some insight into the album's context and logics. To that end, first, I provide a backstory of the project's development; second, I survey each of the tracks; and third, I relay a few lasting hopes for the record and the region it indexes.

I. The Project

Wild Tongue began in February 2018 as a cross-country conversation: on one side, Edinburg, TX; on the other, Stanford, CA. Charlie Vela—a musician, producer, local historian, cultural critic, and documentarian recently celebrated for his and Ronnie Garza's award-winning As I Walk Through the Valley (2017)—and I had each independently expressed desires to celebrate contemporary RGV musical creativity. Both of us products of the RGV's diverse musical settings, we had each recognized a concerning (and widening) gap between representations of and life in the RGV: the border region, in everything from mainstream media stories to indie and bestselling literary efforts, seemed to exist almost entirely as an abstraction, a mere figure to be mobilized and a discourse tapped into. In our own ways, Vela and I were working to draw attention to this gap by pursuing projects that dealt with the region as concept, physical space, and thriving community. And after working independently in the realms of music, writing, and academia, my participation in the Creativity in Research Scholars (CIRS) Program at Stanford University's Hasso Plattner Institute of Design enabled us to collaborate—not only with one another, but also with nine RGV bands, all of whom recorded new, locally focused material at Vela's Sound of Rain Studios.

Each of the nine bands we invited to contribute was to respond to a unifying prompt: "Think about a formative experience you've had in the Rio Grande Valley, and write a new song responding to that experience." Where some artists focused on loss and heartbreak, others reflected on growth and experimentation, and still others on injustice and political action. The result was a record lending new clarity not only to a largely misunderstood region, but also to established and emerging artists vivifying the RGV's local settings.

As the artists responded to the project's unifying prompt, they pursued what I understand to be a process of audiobiography: the (w)riting of self through sound. A process familiar to practicing musicians and avid listeners, audiobiography involves articulating a sense of oneself through sound in relation to a specific listening context; constructing a sense of oneself out of the moods, structures, legacies, and discourses afforded by musical genres; and merging one's own past experiences with future visions in the layered present of musical time. In its most lasting iterations, it requires, as Anzaldúa models in Borderlands/La Frontera, that artists attend to that porous border between inner and outer worlds in order to render private truths and social designs newly legible, communicable, and transformative. And "to have this transformative power," she writes, the "images, words, and stories" produced "must arise from the human body—flesh and bone—and from the Earth's body—stone, sky, liquid, soil."

This grounding—in flesh and surrounding—is indeed the promise of the emotional, existential, and excavational work of self-building and communal healing. Just as autobiography can be "an act or process of simultaneous self-creation and self-emancipation" for communities so often denied the right of self-fashioning and presentation, as theorist Paul Gilroy puts it in his watershed The Black Atlantic, so too can audiobiography, itself part of a broader, multi-dimensional "project of self-liberation." In the midst of such rending events, beneath the boots of so much heavy history, there is a rare magic in seeing oneself reflected in the material one consumes and creates; there is a vital empowerment in, at long last, finally hearing oneself.

The idea of "musical recognition" was an important part of the project, for one of our guiding axioms was that, indeed, representation matters. And as writer Jeff Chang has explored in a wide range of outlets, we each have ethical and political obligations to ask why and how: "Who has access to the means of production of culture? Who is represented in cultural production and the structure of cultural production? How does their representation, misrepresentation, or underrepresentation impact the notion of artistic quality and the reproduction of inequality? And, who has the power to shape culture and cultural production?" Thinking through issues of access, representation, and power at work in art practice, taste making, and community advocacy—and seeing how those issues entwine with the present-day complexities of border experience and media coverage—ultimately helped Vela and I leverage the opportunity created by the CIRS Program.

Our challenge was to design a project that was not only beneficial for all involved, but also cognizant of structural inequities, political polarization, and real hardship. And with the financial backing of CIRS, meeting this challenge was possible: each of the artists, whether solo acts or full bands, was able to record their songs free of charge, arguably enabling them to take new creative risks without fear of burning through personal funds. Vela lent his production expertise to each act, helping the artists realize their musical vision; I interviewed each group after their sessions, synthesizing our conversations into material for the liner notes and the project's overall framing. After a brief "comment period," during which the artists were invited to review the liner notes, the album was released free of charge online to enable its primary audience—RGV listeners—to enjoy the music without incurring financial strain. And because Vela and I are both musicians ourselves, ever aware of the need for artists to get paid for their labors, we equipped and encouraged each of the contributors to sell their tracks on their own after a one-month holding period, as well as to repackage them as part of future releases.

Additionally, because the voices of queer and women of color artists too often go unheard and uncelebrated in many cultural historical projects (and in the music industry writ large), Vela and I made a concerted effort to address their underrepresentation, inviting a majority of bands fronted by queer and women of color artists to contribute their work. Literally and figuratively, we sought to honor their vision and experience by handing over the mic.

Finally, following an "anthology" model of composition inspired by This Bridge Called My Back, a collection Anzaldúa co-edited with queer Chicana playwright Cherríe Moraga, we sought to assemble a collection composed not by one author, but instead by many from a wide range of experiential backgrounds, unified, again, by a very specific kind of self-writing—an aural "theory in the flesh." And while Wild Tongue is definitely not comprehensive—missing are the hardcore punk bands, the heavy metal groups, the mariachis, the fusion experiments, the jazz combos, the newest solo artists making waves—the album's gaps may indeed prove productive: every blank calls for more music, more festivals, more support.

II. The Tracks

As the artists on Wild Tongue demonstrate, to make music between worlds is to cultivate a "stereoscopic sensibility"—or, as author Josh Kun has argued, to hear more than one culture at once, and to find suitable aural form for their dialectics. In what follows, I offer short glimpses of the forms the artists settled on, highlighting select specificities and broader contributions of each of the tracks on the record.

1. Epi and Friends, "Me ha tocado a mí sufrir"

Epi and Friends open the album with a prayer—for all who have suffered, are suffering, may suffer.

Originally written by Epi's father, Epifanio, and revamped for Wild Tongue, "Me ha tocado a mí sufrir" celebrates the meek and the divine by way of conjunto, one of the most recognizable ensemble sounds of the region. In its composition and performance, the work is an intergenerational, family effort—the two vocalists, Cruz and Epi, not only sing close harmonies, but are also mother and son. And it underscores that Tejano music is not a relic of some antiquated past, but rather, as ethnomusicologists including Catherine Ragland and Manuel Peña have shown, a vibrant expression of contemporary effort.

2. Carmen Fría, "Agarra la onda"

Carmen Fría's contribution is in no uncertain terms a call to action: a rallying cry for local artists and activists who have long been fighting to improve the lives of the RGV's most vulnerable community members. Carmen, a versatile multi-instrumentalist and MC active in a number of local bands—Blight Night, Monstruo, Bohemio, Rotary Waves—here fuses psychedelic techno-cumbia, old-school U.S. hip-hop, and extensions of her work with Jesus "Chuy" Reazola in Caldo Frío to deliver a message that highlights the urgency of fighting for social justice. The sentiments expressed—pushing through exhaustion, spreading a message, standing in solidarity with others—are delivered rapidly, bilingually, layered atop an intricate weave of instrumental parts recorded by Carmen herself. The range of techniques on display drives home the underlying message of "Agarra la onda": "You have the power to shift the power."

3. DeZorah, "Las Semillas"

DeZorah's track takes growth as its core concern. Through ample polyrhythms and mixed meters—hallmarks of the band's post-progressive rock sound—"Las Semillas" channels the spirit of groups like At the Drive-In while playing to the strengths of each band member's specific range of talents. To wit: in Danica's soaring vocals, we can hear a simultaneous expression of joy and terror, a tension threaded throughout the band's recent work. As a whole, "Las Semillas" expresses the drama of growth—not an easy, tranquil, silent process, but rather one characterized by difficulty.

4. Twin Tribes "Still in Still"

"Still in Still" is a darkwave exploration of the paranoia and melancholy that often accompanies migrancy and undocumented status in the United States. Through danceable rhythms, melodic synths, and infectious hooks, band members Luis Navarro and Joel Nino tip their hats to their musical influences—The Cure, Depeche Mode—stretching their creative muscles with an array of instruments: a Roland JX3P, a Korg Poly 800, as well as guitar, bass, and their own vocals. Lyrically, the song is characterized by withholding, by the need to keep secrets that, if released, would immediately threaten people's lives; it dramatizes this notion that it may be only a "matter of time" before one might be caught, detained, deported. It also demonstrates an appreciation for migrant sacrifice, a coming-to-terms with displacement, and ultimately, a private acceptance. In all, the song maps a vast emotional territory, reminding us that every day, many dance with darkness to find solace and security.

5. Matt and the Herdsmen, "Bordertown"

Matt and the Herdsmen's song is a coming-of-age narrative rooted in RGV soil. In a style informed by years of participation in Texas country scenes, singer-songwriter Matt Castillo tells a story of yearning, division, even looming doom—"standing at the Rio Grande / I feared that I would drown"—that eventually transforms into acceptance, appreciation, and rootedness: "Cause your roots are what hold you up / Not what keep you down / Growing up, living in a border town." Matt, whose family and musical activities have taken him from

Edinburg to Austin, Houston, and beyond, here displays a commitment to recording his own growth as an RGV resident as well as his conception of what and where “home” might be. As a result, “Bordertown” draws attention to the complexities of belonging and aspiration in the RGV; somehow, by some alchemy, home is at once a small town, a borderlands, a metropolis, a memory.

6. Maria D’Luz, “Productivo”

“Productivo” is a celebration of grit, potential, and experimentation—a call to embrace creative risk. D’Luz, an accomplished songwriter, pianist, singer, businesswoman, and mentor, here draws on her broad palette of musical styles and techniques to get this across: the extended harmonies familiar to jazz circles, the pointed vocal delivery of many rock singers, the rhythmic structures of zapateado flamenco, and the smooth character of bossa nova. Through its musical fusions—including guitarist Mario Aleman’s impressive contribution—“Productivo” exemplifies mixtures familiar to RGV communities; through its lyrical insistence, it pushes for an embrace—even a pursuit—of new risks and combinations. In effect, the song argues for exploration and openness—virtues alive in the body of work D’Luz has produced to date.

7. Pinky Swear, “Bring You Down”

On their track, Pinky Swear reflects on departure and intimacy by dramatizing the meltdown of a relationship. Beginning with an ultimatum—”he said / you can stay or follow me, but I’m leaving”—and ending with an evaluation—”you didn’t have to if you didn’t want to”—the song moves through betrayal and bitterness with refreshing honesty. Sitting at the boundary between grunge and punk, the group’s sound here—marked by a gritty chord progression and Sarah Danger’s scorching vocal performance—brings the lyrics to life. In its transparencies and up-frontness, “Bring You Down” shows how larger pressures to stay or to leave—whether an individual or a place—drive wedges between people, breaking connections apart. The song sits with those pressures to take steps toward individual and communal healing.

8. Jesika, “Party Is Over”

Jesika’s “Party Is Over” is a reflection on the importance of refuge. In many ways a monument to the thriving RGV music scene via its invocation of Cine El Rey on “17th street,” the song follows the slow shed of anxiety that comes with settling in: “Yeah I think I found my peace / in the way the sun sets over 83 / with the way that these transplanted palm trees are just as native as me.” In its interiority and intimacy, “Party Is Over” outlines the very architecture of this album: a call to celebrate personal experience and discover unknown commonalities with others as a result.

9. Arcanedisplay, “Split in Two”

“Split in Two,” the album’s closer, is an intricate synthesis of many of this album’s major themes. A true infusion of lyrical content and musical structure, the song utilizes bilingual lyrics, mixed meters, interlocking polyrhythms, ambient electronic textures, and a nuanced arrangement to relay a personal story of division and reconstitution. It begins by exploring the pressures of assimilation, the suppression of language, manner, and gesture: “Don’t roll your R’s, they’ll look away / Take every chance you can to blend.” It then hones in on the heartbreak of seeing this pressure as part of a bigger picture, a historical inheritance, a colonial scar: “It broke my heart to learn the truth / We weren’t broken into two / We didn’t have to choose.” Finally, in its last moments, the song becomes anthemic: an embrace of self and home.

Each of these songs, in their specificities and engagements, speaks to the artistic diversity of a region consistently characterized as a space of wanting, absence, and criminality. As standalone works, each is a unique and personal expression of what it's been like to live and work in the area. But taken together, as an anthology of honesties, they form a larger impression—incomplete yet rich, unfinished and promising.

III. The Hope

It is our hope that Wild Tongue capture a small slice of the creativity of RGV musicians; something of the values of collaboration, even across thousands of miles; something of the richness of personal exploration through the arts; and something of the necessity of more numerous and nuanced representations of border communities in times of unrest, division, and uncertainty.

It is our hope as well, that Wild Tongue resonates with others who are striving to do the same. On that front: there is the work being done by the entire staff at Neta, a bilingual multimedia platform committed to creating "engaging, culturally relevant content" that addresses issues specific to local residents. There is the work being done by Sirheem "Seems" Fuentes, a musician in the band Future Wives and founder of Mujer RGV, to provide crucial support for women musicians in the region. And there is the work of the numerous activist groups, music promoters, documentarians, poets, painters, music producers, and small business owners striving to nourish local culture. Without question, these efforts are enriching the cultural ecosystem of the present and drafting visions for a more inclusive future. With this project, we offer our own contribution—a musical reminder that while present hardships might feel endless, wild tongues will not be tamed.

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2. For more on Celeste de Luna's art, politics, and philosophy, see this recent interview: Magda García, "Interview with Celeste De Luna," in Camino Real, 10:13. Alcalá de Henares: Instituto FranklinUAH, 2018. Print.
3. Charlie Vela and Ronnie Garza's documentary, well received across the Southwest, went on to win the Special Jury Award at the San Antonio's CineFestival in June 2018. As a follow-up to their film, they also a released a documentary soundtrack spanning decades of RGV music history, which can be accessed here: https://medium.com/@AIWTTV/soundtrack-as-i-walk-through-the-valley-d5dae3d73d7e
4. For a succinct overview of this notion of representation, see Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation" in Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices. Ed. Stuart Hall. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications 1997), 13–74.
I'm also reminded of this quotation of critic Mike Kelley's: "When looking at something that purports to be you, all you can do is comment on whether you feel it is a good resemblance or not." Kelley, Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism. Edited by John C. Welchman. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2003), 41.
5. Anzaldúa, Borderlands / La Frontera, 97.
6. Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1993), 69–70.
Gilroy also offers a related sentiment in that work's conclusion: "Both storytelling and musicmaking [have] contributed to an alternative public sphere, and this in turn provided the context in which the particular styles of autobiographical self-dramatisation and public self-construction have been formed and circulated as an integral component of insubordinate racial countercultures" (200).
7. In this respect, I'm inclined toward a more optimistic reading of Adorno's "The Curves of the Needle": "What the gramophone listener actually wants to hear is himself" (274). Adorno, Essays on Music. Edited by Richard Leppert, translated by Susan H. Gillespie. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2009). See also "Strangers among Sounds" in Josh Kun's Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America. (Berkeley,

CA: University of California Press 2005).

8. For more, see Up from the Underground: Documentation of the Ford Foundation's Future Aesthetics Program, 2002–2014. Eds. Jeff Chang, Jakeya Caruthers, and Kai Kane Aoki Izu. (Stanford, CA: Institute for Diversity in the Arts 2016). See also Bill Ivey, "Cultural Bill of Rights" in Arts, Inc.: How Greed and Neglect Have Destroyed Our Cultural Rights. http://createquity.com/2011/07/arts-policylibrary-arts-inc/

9. More work is always needed on this front, and indeed, more is on the way: One Scene Studios and Neta are hard at work on a new documentary of LGBTQ+ history in the Rio Grande Valley entitled Pansy Pachanga.

10. This Bridge Called My Back is itself unified by a very specific kind of self-writing: a "theory in the flesh," which, as Moraga defines it, is "one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (Moraga 19). In that 1981 volume—a historic text for women of color feminists—one encounters a number of these self and social excavations. Taken together, the pieces speak back to white, chromatic, and nationalist hetero-patriarchies and critique hypocrisies of white feminism; ultimately, they argue that it is only through comparison, compilation, and assemblage that certain truths become legible. See Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 2015).

11. Additionally, to ensure a wide variety of RGV experiences came through, we experimented with some degree of early-stage anonymity: on the whole, none of the artists knew what the others had written before arriving at the studio to record their new songs. The common themes that emerged, then— appreciation for the region, aspirations to leave, struggles for personal and political restitution—feel especially significant, representative of personal experiences and suggestive of deeper issues, concerns, and aspirations.

12. Gilroy, The Black Atlantic, 196.

13. Josh Kun, "Allá in the Mix: Mexican Sonideros and the Musical Politics of Migrancy" in Public Culture 27:3 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2015), 533–555.

14. Catherine Ragland, Música Norteña: Mexican Americans Creating a Nation between Nations. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press 2009). See also Manuel Peña, Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation (College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press 1999).

Epi and Friends's "Me ha tocado a mi sufrir" features Epifanio Martinez (Music and Lyrics), Epi Martinez, Jr. (Vocals / Bajo Sexto), Cruz Martinez (Vocals), Noel Hernandez (Bass), Javier Perez (Drums), Juan Antonio Tapia (Accordion), Charlie Vela (Production). For more on Epi and Friends, see: https://www.facebook.com/pg/EpiandFriends

15. Carmen Fría's "Agarra la onda" features Carmen Castillo (Music and Lyrics) and Charlie Vela (Additional Music and Production). For more on Carmen's work, visit: www.themonitor.com/entertainment/article_26b03912-9b2c-11e7-9870-1b9b2b64733c.html

16. DeZorah's "Las Semillas" features Danica Salazar (Vocals), Eric Martinez (Guitar), Jonathan Garza (Guitar), Daven Martinez (Bass), Trey Puga (Drums), and Charlie Vela (Production). For more on DeZorah, visit: www.netargv.com/2018/05/24/the-evolution-of-dezorah-in-the-rio-grande-valley

17. Twin Tribes's "Still in Still" features Luis Navarro (Music and Lyrics), Joel Nino (Music and Lyrics), and Charlie Vela (Production). For more on Twin Tribes, visit: www.idieyoudie.com/2018/02/twin-tribes-shadows/

18. Matt and the Herdsmen's "Bordertown" features Matt Castillo (Guitar, Vocals, Music, and Lyrics), Everto Cavasos (Electric Guitar), Omar Oyoque (Pedal Steel), and Charlie Vela (Bass, Drums, Music, Lyrics, and Production). For more on their work, visit: www.themonitor.com/entertainment/article_2d5a0f8e-c30c-11e6-8962-07fbeb64b825.html

Additionally, see also the following excerpt from Anzaldúa's Borderlands / La Frontera: "I had to leave home so I could find myself, find my own intrinsic nature buried under the personality that had been imposed on me . . . But I didn't leave all the parts of me: I kept the ground of my being. On it I walked away, taking with me the land, the Valley, Texas" (38).

19. María D'Luz's "Productivo" features Dulce Maria Gonzalez (Music, Lyrics, Vocals, and Piano), Mario

Aleman (Guitar), Raul De Leon Jr. (Percussion), and Charlie Vela (Bass, Drums, and Production). Published through Maple Music Chords Publishing (BMI). For more on María D'Luz, visit: www.mariadluz.com

20. Pinky Swear's "Bring You Down" features Sarah Danger (Music, Lyrics, Vocals, and Rhythm Guitar), Christian Allen Hanks (Lead Guitar), Luther Mangrum (Bass), Maxwell Perkins (Drums), and Charlie Vela (Production). For more on Pinky Swear, visit: https://daily.bandcamp.com/2017/08/23/pinky-swear-texas-band-interview/

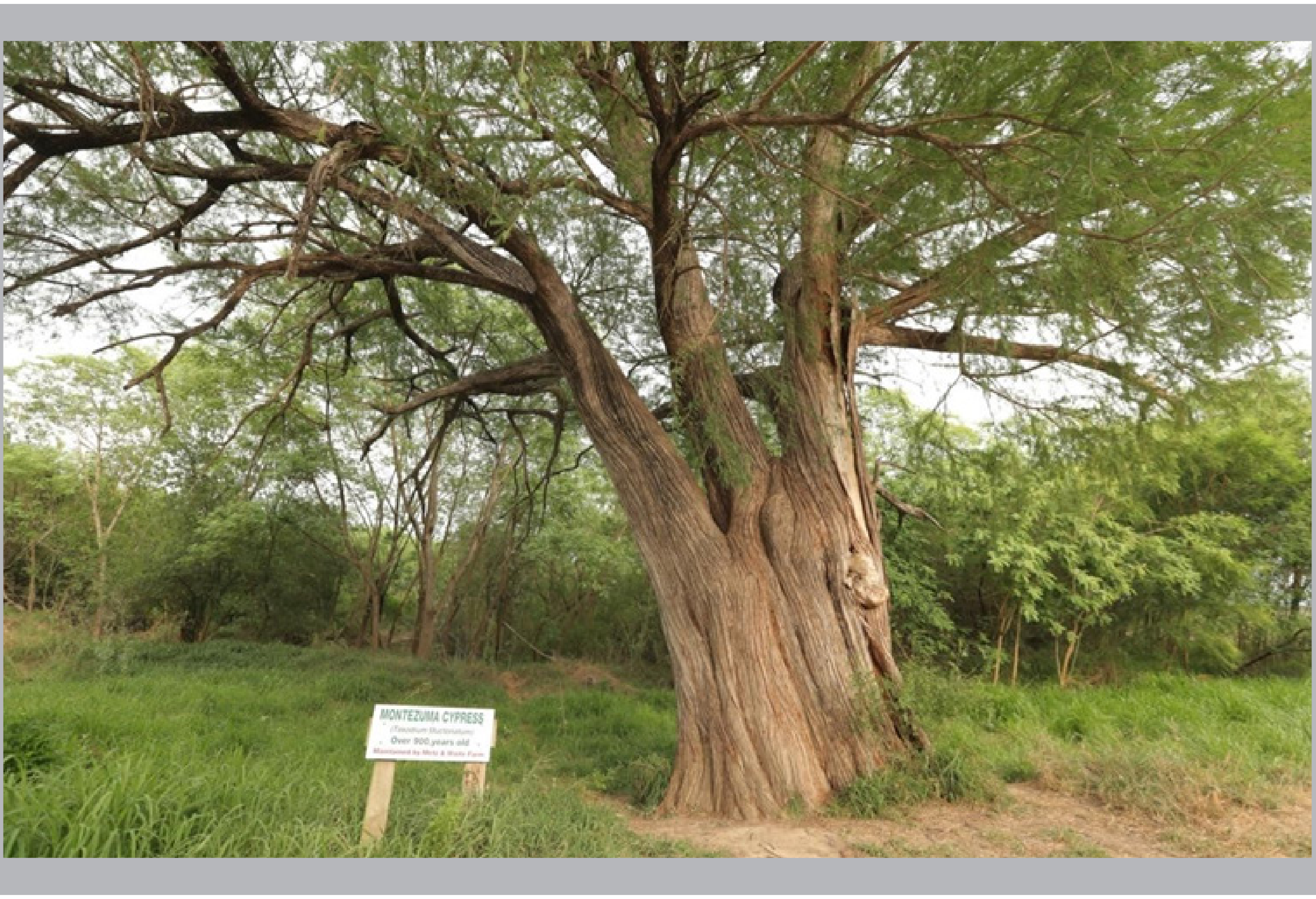
21. Jesika's "Party is Over" features Jesika Espiricueta (Music, Lyrics, Vocals, Guitar, and Theremin), Trey Puga (Drums), Andrews Sanchez (Bass), and Charlie Vela (Production). For more on Jesika, visit: www.themonitor.com/entertainment/article_05c7cc58-2a0e-11e8-898d-9b4e8a6c891e.html

22. Arcanedisplay's "Split in Two" features Diana Tovar (Music, Lyrics, Lead Vocals, Guitar, Bass, and Production), Rudy Cerda (Music, Lyrics, Electronic Beat, Synths, Effects, Group Vocals, and Production), Joey Barrera (Drums and Group Vocals), Robert Barrera (Guitar and Group Vocals), Efrain Mungia (Cello), David Moreno (Trumpet), Sirheem Fuentes (Group Vocals), Sergio Trevino (Group Vocals), Victoria Alvarez (Group Vocals), and Charlie Vela (Additional Production). For more on Arcanedisplay, visit: https://www.facebook.com/arcanedisplay/

23. In follow-up interviews after their recording sessions, I asked the artists about their hopes for the region, and about how they see music fitting into that development. Their answers included the following. "And after many, many years of consistent battling (on the activist front), it's really easy to give up hope, to get tired. But music has consistently been that 'something' that gives people hope. Singing just makes people feel good. Through music, artists are able to remind people: 'This is why we're doing this. This is why we need to keep going.'" Carmen Castillo (Musician), interviewed by Jonathan Leal via phone on April 14, 2018.

"I want to see more women artists and queer artists on stages. A lot of these folks are not validated like they should be. We need more diverse lineups. We just need more. And you know . . . people always sing along to songs that, honestly, don't have much immediate relevance to them. Not that songs need to, but that's a different conversation. With my music, though, maybe even with this project, I want to offer people something different. I want to offer something to women in the Valley who are like me—women who feel very different and ostracized. I want to let them know that it's okay to be who you are. I want to empower people. When I get an opportunity, I want to spread it around." Jesika Espiricueta (Musician), interviewed by Jonathan Leal via phone on April 15, 2018.

900-year-old Montezuma bald cypress, Abram, Tx.


MONTEZUMA CYPRESS
Over 900 years old

Photographed by Frank Segovia

And Then They Smiled

Monica M. Valadez and Sofía G. Valadez

During the 2016-2017 academic year, our local school district initiated investigation into the development and implementation of a dual language program. The program would begin in first grades and over the course of a few years, phase out what in name was a late-exit bilingual model, but in practice was an early transition one. This investigative year marked my first full year serving as Community and Attendance Liaison for the district. With new sights set on the development of a dual language program, and the recent change in attendance policies that moved mandates away from court referrals to prevention and intervention, both the program and my position were, in a sense, under (re)construction. This afforded us the ability to explore the community aspects of my job description and partner with the director of bilingual education to cross traditional borders of program development within public schools.

We partnered with doctoral students enrolled in a community development class from our local university and began facilitating learning exchanges in which we invited authentic community conversations with parents, community members, educators, and administration, and initially focused on capturing the local narrative about language, both current and historical. Within the initial semester, we found ourselves immersed in stories at multiple levels of impact that spoke of trauma and dominance around language, and in particular language loss. But more significantly, we developed a more profound understanding of the stories of local leaders that paved the way, challenging segregation within education and civic organizations and embracing and manifesting a call to action through community leadership. Subsequently, we discovered that the logistical and technical components of program development, often at the top of priority lists, were replaced by a deliberate attention to the life force of the stories that spoke to a desire to reclaim not only a heritage language, but also a way of being.

This backdrop serves to frame this thought piece on our community's introduction to Ballet Nepantla and the Company's performance of Sin Fronteras. It had been a few years since I had purposefully considered the concept of Anzaldúa's (2012) nepantla even as I explored ways in which to live the various borderlands that exist within public schools and navigate and elicit from them insights into the stories that exist within every member of the community, both inside and outside the physical structures of schools. The Company's performance in the fall of 2017 in Austin, Texas, was a welcomed and needed opportunity for the parents from our dual language program to witness a cultural experience that would provoke them to consider their children's participation in the program as considerably more than learning Spanish for future opportunity, including advantages in employability.

We were excited to have in attendance a group comprised of parents, students, and educators from our local school district. All had an enjoyable experience. For some it reaffirmed the value they place within their families on the cultural strengths of their heritage. For others, it was an exploration of other, a look into art expressed through the lens of a history and way of being different than their own. For me, it only began to scratch the surface of the possibilities in the exploration of borderlands. It was not that the artistic expression witnessed did not continue to speak to the importance of critically developing a cultural awareness within our dual language program, but that it so poignantly resounded within the landscape of a greater community focus. I began to consider the application of nepantla within my work as Community and Attendance Liaison and more consciously explore the various borderlands that the students and parents with whom I work, traverse every day, oftentimes of great consequence to living a life of hope and joy. Within this consideration, nuanced explorations of nepantla and sin fronteras emerged, more fully capturing the fluidity that Anzaldúa (2012) posited in To live in the Borderlands means you, challenging us to "be a crossroads" (p. 217).

These concepts lived at the surface of my being for months after witnessing Ballet Nepantla's performance and when our school district was offered the opportunity to host the Company within our own community, the wheels set in motion to coordinate friends and colleagues to receive them with a great anticipation to both disrupt and reignite our imaginations around the arts as a vehicle of cultural expression, as well as sense making. From negotiating the use of performance space and musical equipment to recruiting community members to prepare a homemade meal for our guests that evening, and everything in between, all became a microcosm of the intimacy of relationship at the forefront of meaningful community development.

Within this tapestry shone a vivid strand and an exemplary model of the new mestiza, that through her experience, I was better able to make sense of the profound nature and impact of the day. This new mestiza, my niece and co-author, during pláticas over coffee or lunch, expressed an experience of personal (r)evolution, a critical introspection of self spurred by Ballet Nepantla's performance as is documented in and through our conversations.

TIA: I was very excited about you joining us for Ballet Nepantla's visit. There was no question that you would enjoy the performance, but I also knew there would be time for you to witness their rehearsal and get a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the preparation. What sense did you experience when you were first introduced to the Company and as they prepared for the opening curtain?

SOFIA: I recall feelings of insecurity while observing them rehearse. It was a sense of intimidation by the quality and intensity of their preparation. I had not experienced this level within my own training as a ballet folklorico dancer, and it made me at once doubt my skill level and question my commitment to the art. They were on point and exact in their measurements. I also remember the quality of the traditional ballet moves that were infused and almost involuntarily using it as a unit of measurement of my abilities.

TIA: Did that feeling subside at any point? How did you make sense of it?

SOFIA: It was more that it disappeared rather than subsided. We took our seats in the front row, the performance began, the artists appeared…and then they smiled! And a sense of joy washed over me and I remember thinking, is this what I inspire in others when I dance? In an instant I was elevated to a very different way of understanding my own experience as a dancer. It provoked in me a need to reflect about this art that I not only perform, but that has also accompanied me through most of my life.

TIA: What most stood out to you when you were reflecting?

SOFIA: I think it was this crossing from the technical aspects of the performance to the expression of it, if that makes sense. When I was in elementary school, I danced because it was fun and I found beauty in the dress and artistry. I do not recall it being about getting the steps right or wrong. This perspective began to change as I got older and I became more aware about a certain purpose of the dance. There had to be technical components to it. There were right steps and wrong steps. But even at this point, it remained a joyful expression.

TIA: Was there a time when it stopped being joyful?

SOFIA: As I watched Ballet Nepantla, I wondered who they were dancing for, themselves or others. In reflecting on my experience, I remember going from dancing for myself and others, to performing for judges. In middle school, I reached a level of skill that catapulted me to leader within my group. I was not a leader in position necessarily, but I remember working with my peers and providing them feedback and guidance and it made me feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. But I also remember that when I was officially given a position of officer within my dance group, I evolved into judge and jury instead. I became hyper focused on the technical aspects of the dance, on getting things "right" and I lost the joy that I had once experienced. In my own performances, especially solos, I found myself dancing for the judges and only the judges.

TIA: In our pláticas, we have discussed the concept of nepantla or in betweenness. I have mentioned some of the challenges that I see daily in the youth and families that I meet through my work in the school district and I begin to consider how so many, for varied reasons, are experiencing these spaces and how we might frame opportunities for them to make sense for themselves and reclaim a sense of hope. You just turned 18 and are entering your last year of high school. How do you understand this concept as it relates to what you were experiencing during this space in which you lost a joy for dancing?

SOFIA: I had never really considered it as a space or in betweeness, but I can see it. What happened in family, happened in dance. The separation of my mom and dad disrupted my security in family, faith and dance. Dance became a discipline of trying to get through the disruption. I was simply following the motions and waiting for things to start making sense again. The technical aspects continued to be the dominant force in dance and in life. I continued to play the role of officer and felt a need to be everyone's rock. I know you were moved by the performance of La Llorona, and I can see why. It draws you in and you connect to the anguish, it is almost as if you are experiencing life and not a performance. I sensed the weight of the tragedy as if it were my own, carrying my own pain as well as that of others.

TIA: I believe you have experienced it with a greater rawness as a performance artist, this opportunity that the arts have to heal and connect community to think in new ways around deep issues. It has been a few months since Ballet Nepantla's performance, what has continued to stand out for you?

SOFIA: I came away from the performance with a greater awareness of myself, both personally and as a dancer. I relive the moment when they smiled and it was present in my first competition after witnessing the ballet. The framing for that competition was to dance for the joy of expression, both to feel the joy myself and to share it with others. It was the most alive I have felt in dance and I can only describe it as being outside of my own body and watching myself perform. I knew that if I could dance for me, then that energy would cross over to the audience and that joy would then be reciprocated. It was an overwhelming sense of connection. In that moment, I captured a greater understanding of the art as a whole, the roots of the culture, the why of the dress and the steps, and the regions and the inheritance they represent. The response I received was wonderful. I later watched a video of the performance and wept because I recognized that I had accomplished dancing for the joy of expression rather than the judgement of the performance. I am now remembering why I dance.

Reflection

I consider the mature young woman that my niece has become and continues to become, and I consider the phenomenon of community development within the context of educational spaces and the borderlands that are created. Anzaldúa (2012) called us to take inventory and distinguish between "lo heredado, lo adquirido, lo impuesto" – that which was inherited, that which was acquired, that which was imposed (p. 104). Ballet Nepantla's Sin Fronteras is evidence of this inventory, but also of a rupture and a reimagination of the joy and possibilities born of the human spirit through music and dance. And it is in this spirit that I posit Ballet Nepantla's performance of Sin Fronteras as reaffirmation that the strength and health of any community is only as strong as the space in which our commonalities and our differences are acknowledged and embraced as gift and possibility.

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Río Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands | Spring 2020

Cultural Narratives and Counterstories: Examining Representation in "Prietita y La Llorona"

Christian Zuniga

ABSTRACT

Stories can be a powerful medium through which to simultaneously reinforce and counter oppressive discourse. This article examines Gloria Anzaldúa's children's book, Prietita y La Llorona, as a counterstory method within the larger genre of Latinx children's literature. Counterstories are a powerful method used by Critical Race and feminist theorists to center the delegitimized experiences of marginalized communities. Drawing on theories around discourse, representation, and intersectionality, the article explores the ways in which Anzaldúa counters cultural narratives that diminish community cultural wealth and women's positions as agents of knowledge through the characters of Doña Lola and La Llorona.

Su abuela decía que La Llorona se aparecía en la noche por los ríos o las lagunas
llorando por sus hijos perdidos y buscando a otros niños para robárselos.
—***"Prietita y La Llorona" (Anzaldúa 1995)***

The racism I would later recognize in my school teachers
and never be able to ignore again I found in the first western I read.
—***"La Prieta" (Anzaldúa 2009a)***

Storytelling is fundamental to our families and communities; it supports the transmission of family history, ideas, knowledge, and values from one generation to the next. Storytelling is, on one hand, funds of knowledge—"historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for the household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll et al. 2005, 72). As part of a larger network of cultural capital, stories and storytelling "construct a sense of belonging and identity that may support the ability of the family to participate in society (Bourdieu 2003, Delgado Bernal 2001, Martínez-Roldán 2005, 507, Yosso, 2005). On the other hand, storytelling also (re)produces cultural narratives transmitting hegemonic discourses that socially define what is "normal" and marginalize that which is "Other" (Anzaldúa 2007, Said 1978, Bourdieu 2003).

As the Other is (re)represented through cultural mediums, like literature and storytelling, dominant discourses are reproduced. Therefore, "attention to the politics of representation has been crucial for colonized groups globally in the struggle for self-determination" (hooks 1990, 72). Given the importance of children's books as pedagogical tools to develop children's literacy and their role in a larger schooling and socialization process, examining and challenging the "politics of representation" is especially significant in children's literature, which can ignore and/or misrepresent marginalized groups and their experiences (Barrera and Quiroa 2003, Martínez-Roldán 2013). It is imperative to critically examine the ways in which these texts traverse the simultaneous reproduction and contestation of subjugating narratives.

Researchers in education have highlighted the importance of curriculum that both draws on students' "funds of knowledge" and engages them in critical considerations around race, gender, and other intersecting identities (Yosso 2002, 2005, Moll et al. 2005, Medina and Martínez-Roldán 2011, Fránquiz, Ávila, and Lewis 2013).

With growing trends for multiculturalism in education, researchers and educators are called to critically reflect upon and unlearn oppressive discourses (Saavedra and Salazar Pérez 2012). In fact, today's sociopolitical contexts of xenophobia, misogyny, and disinformation require these conversations in our schools. This article attempts to address this need by examining Anzaldúa's (1996) illustrated children's book, *Prietita y la Llorona/ Prietita and the Ghost Woman,* as an example of the ways in which children's literature can be counterstories resisting pervasive discourses, and re-centering other points of view. Anzaldúa's story counters dominant representations that question women's morality and delegitimize their knowledge. I examine the positioning of two characters—La Curandera and La Llorona--both within the story and historical, dominant cultural narratives to understand the ways in which Anzaldúa re-represents or re-creates the narratives surrounding these characters.

Prietita y La Llorona: A Children's Book

Prietita y La Llorona is an illustrated, dual-language (English and Spanish side-by-side), children's book written by Gloria Anzaldúa. The protagonist, Prietita, is a young girl growing up in south Texas. Her mother has fallen ill, and Prietita seeks the advice and knowledge of her mentor, Doña Lola, a curandera (healer). Doña Lola sends Prietita on a journey to the King Ranch, a dangerous place where intruders are met with gunfire, to find a rue plant, which she needs for the remedy. After getting lost and seeking the help of the area's animals, Prietita encounters La Llorona, the infamous ghost woman of la frontera about whom she has heard stories from her grandmother. Although initially frightened, Prietita asks La Llorona for her help in finding the rue plant. La Llorona guides Prietita to the plant, then to safety, and disappears. The story is comprised of all female characters with the exception of Prietita's cousin, Teté, who appears and speaks towards the end of the story.

Prietita y La Llorona has been analyzed by scholars in various ways. Hartley (2010) focused on the character of la curandera as Anzaldúa herself challenging colonialist violence. Fránquiz et al. (2013) used the book to explore the interactions between bilingual teachers and their students through the concept of nepantla. Together, these analyses help to better understand the ways in which discourse is used to address power and subjugation. Through this article, I hope to contribute to this valuable, on-going conversation by studying the text as an effective counterstory method useful to schools, families, and teacher educators.

Storytelling: Discourse, Representation and Intersectionality

Discourses of colonization and patriarchy have sanctioned the oppression of marginalized groups, particularly that of women of color (hooks 1990, Anzaldúa 2007, Collins 1993). Citing Foucault, Hall (2008b) described discourse as a system of representation and defined it as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing—the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment (72). It is through discourse, for example, that the West has been normalized as a civilized, Christian, European entity while simultaneously producing a deviant, savage, indigenous Other in need of colonization and salvation (Said 1978, Spivak 1988). The politics of representation rely upon controlling the image, and thus the identity, of a group. Ultimately, this is an issue of power. Power over who represents the image, for what purpose, and to whose benefit (Delgado Bernal 1998, hooks 1990). Said (1978) argues that "culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent" (7). It is through consent that the Other becomes represented, defined, and subdued.

Consent breeds an internalized oppression. For Anzaldúa (2009), subjugated groups can be accomplices who participate in the reproduction of oppressive ideologies. In her essay, La Prieta, Anzaldúa (2009) writes: It is difficult for me to break free of the Chicano cultural bias into which I was born and raised,

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3 The King Ranch is located in south Texas. Some have interpreted Anzaldúa's use of the King Ranch as a physical metaphor for the violence of colonialism given how European colonizers seized the land (Hartley, 2010).

and the cultural bias of Anglo culture that I was brainwashed into adopting. It is easier to repeat the racial patterns and attitudes, especially those of fear and prejudice, that we have inherited than to resist them (48).

She underscores that the racial and gender constructs created by European and U.S. colonizing powers have seeped into the ways "women and Third World" groups define themselves (48). Therefore, it is not only mainstream narratives about marginalized groups that need to be disrupted. Intra-group cultural narratives are pervasive too, and must likewise be contested. For Critical Race theorists (CRT) and feminist scholars of color, counterstories have become an effective method for defying oppressive discourses.

Counterstories and the Intersectionality of Representation

Counterstories are a "method of telling a story of those experiences that are not often told (i.e. those on the margins of society) and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is a natural part of the dominant discourse—the majoritarian story" (Solorzano and Yosso 2001, 475). Counterstories not only center the experiences of otherwise marginalized groups, but also offer complexity to the intersectionality of their identities, particularly race/ethnicity and gender.

CRT and feminist scholars of color emphasize an interlocking system of intersectionality and subjugation where race, class, gender, and other identities converge (Collins 1993, Delgado Bernal 1998, Solorzano and Yosso 2001, Yosso 2002). Collins (1993) explores the "matrix of domination" where an individual can simultaneously have membership within both subordinated and dominant groups. Delgado Bernal (2001) looks at "mestiza consciousness" as deriving from a multiplicity of experiences, including race/ethnicity, gender, bilingualism/biculturalism and spirituality. Anzaldúa (2009) wrestled with her competing racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual identities and offered "the bridge" as a metaphor for how she tried to connect these identities, but conceded that there could be great contradictions in navigating these at the same time.

Additionally, Anzaldúa (2007) warned against the cultural narratives of her Chicanx community, highlighting the ways in which language, permeated by male discourse, aimed to control women's actions, bodies, and identities.

Counterstories, however, centralize the agency, knowledge, and voice of people of color within the intersection of other identities. They defy dominant ideologies and legitimize the experiential knowledge and cultural wealth of otherwise silenced communities (Delgado Bernal 1998; Dixon and Rousseau 2005; Yosso 2005). This is especially true for women of color whose gender and racial identities (among others) can doubly reinforce their marginalization. Collins (1993), for example, argues for centralizing Black women's identities as "agents of knowledge" whose knowledge and experiences function within "spheres of influence" that make them vital to their communities. Delgado Bernal (1998, 2001) names Chicana feminist epistemologies and "pedagogies of the home" as central to Chicana ways of knowing and stemming from experiences at the intersection of issues of language, race/ethnicity, gender, and social class, and home/community practices. As Hartley (2010) points out, Anzaldúa also understood that women, like curanderas, hold important knowledge, essential to their communities, that has been delegitimized by colonization (137). This is where the power of counterstories truly lies—their ability to challenge oppressive discourse, and then re-center and legitimize who and what has been erased.

For our future generations, re-claiming the cultural wealth of their ancestors is important. Counterstories must be constant and systematically present for our children, especially as they navigate xenophobic, homophobic, and misogynistic contexts that undervalue their identities and the contributions and resources of their communities. Children's literature has the power to counter majoritarian discourses in schools, communities, and society.

Latinx Children's Literature: A Trajectory of Politics and Activism

In schools, children's literature is an important pedagogical tool. Yet, many Latinx children do not see their community experiences reflected in their storybooks. In cases where Latinx experiences are visible, these can be diminished to negative language and cultural stereotypes (Barrera and Quiroa 2003, Martínez-Roldán 2013). Latinx authors have responded to these omissions, misrepresentations, and the strong tradition of storytelling in Latinx culture by writing children's books, in English, Spanish, and Spanglish, that speak to the multidimensionality of the U.S. Latinx experience (Ada 2003).

Given the dearth of children's literature written by, for, and about Latinx communities, writing these stories is in itself political. While not all Latinx children's authors focus on the political, there is a history of Spanish-speaking communities producing children's literature to address critical ideas that can be traced in part to Jose Martí's La Edad de Oro, a children's literary magazine. Martí, a Cuban revolutionary, used the publication in the 19th century to address issues of social justice and highlight the Americas' common indigenous heritage as central to a unified Latinoamericano identity (Ada 2003, Martínez-Roldán 2013). Today, U.S.

Latinx children's literature often remains focused on cultural expression and political activism and shows characters navigating complex situations and spaces (Medina and Enciso 2002, Medina and Martínez-Roldán 2011). Therefore, U.S. Latinx children's literature often bestows opportunities for critical conversations among and between teachers and students (Fránquiz et al.

2013, Zúñiga 2015). As a genre, Latinx children's literature can be counterstories that confront dominant ideologies and narratives long taken for granted as truth, and make classrooms into transformative spaces. Just by existing, these books already challenge a status quo that limits the publication of Latinx-centered stories; however, many of these books, like Prietita y La Llorona, actively seek to engage and challenge their audience.

"Reading the Word and the World"

I examined the story through the two main story characters —La Curandera, and La Llorona — by first looking at their positioning in the story and juxtaposing these with their positioning in more traditional cultural narratives. Positioning is about the ways in which identities are created and (re)created across contexts and interactions (Davies and Harré 1990). Positioning was studied through the narrative text and each characters' dialogue and/or actions.

This included surveying sociolinguistic devices like honorifics, which name status through language (Keating 1998). My guiding question for analysis was: In what ways does Anzaldúa rerepresent or re-create the narratives surrounding La Llorona and La Curandera?

Freire (2007) argues that we read the word to read the world and vice-versa. As the interpreter of this text, there is a need to offer insight to the ways in which my world, influenced by my experiences and intersectionalities, shape my reading of the text, including the oppressive discourses that I have internalized in the process (Delgado Bernal 2001, Saavedra and Salazar Pérez 2012). I was born and raised bilingual in Anzaldua's Rio Grande Valley. My education was in English, centered around Eurocentric curriculums, and at mostly white institutions of higher education. Family conversations, especially with my abuelitas, were in Spanish. This proved critical in my ability to learn from them and their stories.

During this analysis, I considered the role of spirituality and medicine in my upbringing, especially growing up on the Texas U.S.-Mexico border. As a child, I spent weekends with my abuelita paterna in Mexico. She went to mass often wearing a veil, lit candles to her saints, and used remedios to cure empacho (painful belly aches believed to stem from food sticking to the stomach wall) and susto (paralyzing fear after a traumatic event). I also regularly visited my abuelita materna, who was not an avid church-goer, but identified as a "woman of faith" with particular veneration for La Virgen María. Trained by her mother, she had been a midwife and sobadora (used massage as a way to heal) in the Rio Grande Valley. She had remedios for empacho, mal de ojo (evil eye), or other ailments. In retrospect, my grandmothers' wisdom and conocimientos were important "funds of knowledge" in my family stemming from generations. Also, both my abuelitas were great storytellers! They often shared their encounters with the unexplained, the spiritual world, and La Llorona! It is through these lenses that I offer my interpretation of Anzaldúa's text.

La Curandera y La Llorona: Challenging Narratives

Like other Latinx children's literature, Anzaldúa explores themes of community, spirituality, and healing that "disrupt Western notions of religion and colonialism which sought to displace indigenous beliefs and practices," such as curanderismo (Medina & Enciso, 2002, 42). Additionally, she re-creates the story of La Llorona and challenges her representation within Latinx culture and discourse as a "mala mujer" or bad woman. It is important to highlight that Anzaldúa's writings and others' analysis suggests that Prietita, La Curandera, and La Llorona are versions of Anzaldúa herself (Hartley 2010, Anzaldúa 2009a, b). In her various writings, from children's books to short stories to poems, she has used these as metaphors to challenge dominant discourses around race/ethnicity, patriarchy, colonialism, and indigeneity. For this analysis, I will focus on two characters that help our protagonist, Prietita, find her way.

La Curandera

The dominant, Western narrative surrounding curanderismo is typically one of pseudoscience and the occult. An excerpt derived from an archived article from Time Magazine best describes the way in which curanderismo has been delegitimized by the U.S. medical community.

Finally, the curanderos should be enlisted as health aides. They can be given short courses to qualify as practical nurses (…) and allowed to wear uniforms or badges, and to dispense simple medicines. They should serve as go-betweens for doctors and nurses and Mexican-American patients. Then, at last, they will bring their patients to clinics and hospitals, where they can get modern scientific treatment—by whatever name (Time, 1961).

The article presented solutions as to how best to deal with curanderismo practices along the U.S.Mexico border and provide "modern scientific treatment" to the local community. The solution here is to "dress up" local curanderos and place them within Western medical contexts. Unfortunately, Western science and medical discourse often fails to realize that elements like curanderismo are situated culturally and historically in Latinx communities. Therefore, to simply transpose curanderas to hospital settings is insulting to their practice and the deep connection they hold with their community. Curanderas function within "spheres of influence" where their knowledge and expertise is sought and needed by local families (Collins 1993). Yet, such delegitimizing practices are routine for colonizing powers attempting to challenge notions of truth, knowledge, and authority within local, colonized communities (Schieffelin 2000).

Anzaldúa's Doña Lola is part of a network of cultural capital upon which local families rely upon for medicinal cures and remedies. Doña Lola is clearly a respected member of the community who is sought out in time of need. Upon hearing of her mother's sickness, Prietita immediately goes to Doña Lola for help.

> *–Doña Lola—dijo Prietita con mucho respeto—, usted conoce todas las plantas curativas de este valle. Mi madre sufre de la vieja enfermedad otra vez. Hay algún remedio que la pueda ayudar?* ***["Doña Lola," said Prietita respectfully, "You know every healing plant in this valley. My mother has the old sickness again. Is there any remedy that can help her?"]***

Prietita employs honorific language like "doña" and "usted" when speaking to Doña Lola. Furthermore, she addresses her "respectfully" or with "mucho respeto.". Keating (1998) states that honorifics are used to signify status, like eldership, and honor, which comes with having accrued what Bourdieu (2003) has termed social capital (400). Therefore, Doña Lola embodies respect and honor as Prietita's elder and as a wise, knowledgeable woman.

Doña Lola, as a curandera, commands the respect of the local community, which she knows well ("Usted conoce todas las plantas curativas de este valle"). She is a valuable resource. Prietita does not hesitate to ask Doña Lola for a remedy to help her mother's sickness. She knows that if anyone can help her it is Doña Lola with her knowledge and experience. Collins (1993) argued for a re-conceptualization of power focused on Black women's "spheres of influence" (i.e. family, church, etc.) and their experiences as "bloodmothers, othermothers, and community othermothers" (616). Anzaldúa too viewed la curandera as an embodiment of indigenous knowledge (Hartley 2010). Such non-Eurocentric notions of women, community, and healing are at odds with Westernized values, and give a legitimate voice to women of colors' experiences and ways of knowing. Likewise, curanderas function within their own "spheres of influence" drawing on home/community pedagogies that re-conceptualize a Latinx-centered notion of family and community that draws upon local resources as part of a larger network of cultural capital (Bourdieu 2003, Delgado Bernal 2001, Moll et al. 2005). Anzaldúa (1995) offers insight into the role of la curandera within local communities as both a highly valued community resource and an "agent of knowledge."

As part of a community's funds of knowledge, curanderismo relies on its transmission to younger generations for its continuation (Hartley, 2010). Here learning often happens as an apprenticeship, where the apprentice gains the knowledge and wisdom over time and with strong guidance from a mentor-expert. In Prietita y La Llorona, Doña Lola is not merely sharing, but rather teaching Prietita her knowledge and wisdom.

> *"Doña Lola puede curar casi cualquier enfermedad. Ella conoce muchos remedios. Me está enseñando todo sobre los remedios."* ***["Doña Lola can cure almost any sickness. She knows lots of remedies. She's teaching me all about them."]***

In this particular excerpt, Prietita acknowledges Doña Lola's knowledge and wisdom regarding natural remedies. Doña Lola not only "knows lots of remedies" but her expertise can cure "almost any sickness." Doña Lola yields a vast amount of knowledge, or "home pedagogies" that Prietita also hopes to one day have (Delgado Bernal 2001). As a curandera, she is an "agent of knowledge" whose ways of knowing are situated within the historical and cultural context of the community she serves.

Collins (1993) argues for a "paradigmatic shift" and a re-conceptualization of empowerment for Black women as "agents of knowledge." "Within Black women's communities, thought is validated and produced with reference to a particular set of historical, material, and epistemological conditions" (Collins, 1993, 621). Similarly, as a community member and curandera, Doña Lola's knowledge is validated and (re)produced within a particular community's notions of truth, knowledge and authority. It is these conditions that legitimize la curandera's knowledge and grants her authority within the context in which she practices (Bourdieu, 1994).

Doña Lola plays an important role in helping Prietita find a cure for her mother. However, Prietita also receives unexpected help from another important woman in the story, La Llorona. As in the case of curanderas, Anzaldúa also challenges the cultural narratives that seem to define who La Llorona is within Latinx culture.

La Llorona

Anzaldúa alludes to the re-telling of La Llorona's story to younger generations and the caveat of La Llorona abducting children to replace her own.

> *Su abuela decía que la Llorona se aparecía en la noche por los ríos o las lagunas llorando por sus hijos perdidos y buscando a otros niños para robárselos"* ***[Her grandmother said that la Llorona appeared at night by rivers or lagoons, crying for her lost children and looking for other children to steal.]***

Here Prietita is reminded of her grandmother's tales about La Llorona as something to be feared. The story of La Llorona is said to originate from an old Spanish legend of La Dama Blanca (the Lady in White) brought to the Americas by Spanish conquistadores and settlers (Ada, 2003). Versions vary, but as I have heard it through countless retellings, La Llorona had been a beautiful, vain woman. After a few years of marriage and having several children, her husband abandoned her for another woman. Unable to handle the betrayal, she drowned her children and herself in a river. Her tortured soul now walks riverbanks in search of her children, or any other children she might come across. Her legend is a cautionary tale for "bad women" and "bad mothers" whose pride and selfishness can lead to tragic, irrational acts.

In her book, Borderlands, Anzaldúa (2007) critiques the narrative of the "bad woman" that pervades Latinx culture. "In my culture, selfishness is condemned, especially in women; humility and selflessness, the absence of selfishness, is considered a virtue" (Anzaldúa, 2007, 40). It is through this cultural lens and repeated storytellings that La Llorona's reputation as a "bad woman" is formed. Knowledge is constructed through discourse, including stories, narratives, and traditions (Hall 2008b). Anzaldúa (2007) furthers the point that the production of knowledge occurs through language, and is organized around systems of culture. She critiques the "cultural tyranny" that drives and distorts reality. "Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through culture. Culture is made by those in power—men" (Anzaldúa, 2007, 38). Anzaldúa argues that culture drives oppressive discourses that subjugate women and give higher status to men. In the case of Prietita y La Llorona, Anzaldúa re-creates the cultural narrative of La Llorona and challenges readers to do the same.

As Prietita continues walking in search of the rue plant she needs, she encounters La Llorona.

> *En una voz temblorosa, Prietita se dirigió a la mujer fantasma:--Por favor, señora, ¿me puede ayudar a encontrar un poco de ruda?* ***[In a trembling voice, Prietita called out to the ghost woman. "Please, Señora, can you help me find some rue?"]***

The fact that Prietita asked for help in a "trembling voice" shows her initial fear of La Llorona. After all, Prietita has grown up hearing stories about an evil specter abducting children. In this moment, Prietita is "the bridge," a form of nepantla, that connects the fears of dominant ideologies with the possibilities of the counterstory (Anzaldúa 2009a).

Furthermore, Anzaldúa (2009) contends that "…we let color, class, and gender separate us from those who would be kindred spirits. So the walls grow higher, the gulfs between us wider, the silences more profound. There is an enormous contradiction in being a bridge" (47). Still, in a bold move, Prietita asks for La Llorona's help. La Llorona never speaks to Prietita, but does guide her to the rue plant she seeks. The book's illustrations show La Llorona hovering over Prietita as a guide and leading her towards the spot where the rue plant grows.

Despite the stories, La Llorona does not hurt Prietita. On the contrary, she is Prietita's guide in finding what she needs, and in navigating the vast premises of the King Ranch. La Llorona appears to be knowledgeable enough of remedios to find the rue plant, and familiar enough with the King Ranch context to know that Prietita is not safe. She too is an "agent of knowledge" engaged in "community mothering" within her own "spheres of influence" (Collins, 1993). So what if La Llorona is not looking for children to abduct, but rather looking for children who need her help? With a few lines and illustrations, Anzaldúa has directly challenged the narrative of La Llorona as a "bad woman/mother" or something to be feared. On the contrary, she proved to be a nurturing guide engaging in her own mothering ways.

At the story's end, Prietita is reunited with her friends and family who have been out looking for her. Prietita shares her adventure and encounter with the helpful ghost woman much to the amazement of her audience.

> *–Una mujer fantasma vestida de blanco fue mi guía.* ***["A ghost woman in white was my guide."]***
> *–!La Llorona!—dijo Teté, el primo de Prietita—Pero todos saben que ella se lleva a los niños y que no los regresa.* ***["La Llorona!" said Prietita's cousin, Teté. "But everyone knows she takes children away. She doesn't bring them back."]***
> *–Tal vez ella no sea como mucha gente piensa que es—dijo doña Lola.*
> ***["Perhaps she is not what others think she is," said Doña Lola.]***

After Prietita shared her encounter, her cousin Teté, the only male in the story, reminds the group that "everyone knows she takes children away.". It is interesting that the male character reinforces the dominant narrative surrounding La Llorona as someone to be feared, and assumes this is something all "know" to be true. This seems to echo Anzaldúa's (2007) view of male discourse as oppressive. However, equally interesting is that it is Doña Lola, the curandera who challenges Teté's narrative by emphasizing that "perhaps she is not what others think." It is through Doña Lola's wisdom and positioning that Anzaldúa challenges the dominant cultural ideology surrounding La Llorona as a bad woman/mother.

Re-Positioning Women as "Agents of Knowledge"

The story of Prietita y La Llorona is a direct challenge to dominant Western discourses of medicine and science that delegitimize women as "agents of knowledge," and to cultural narratives that frame women through gendered categories, such as the "bad woman" or "bad mother." I was interested in examining the ways in which Anzaldúa re-represents or re-creates the narratives surrounding La Llorona and La Curandera.

Anzaldúa positions la Curandera and La Llorona in ways that do not reflect the traditional narratives and discourses used to define them or their positioning within more mainstream narratives, such as "bad woman" or "pseudo-medicine.". On the contrary, their re-representation invites readers to question their original assumptions about who these women are and their contributions. La Curandera is represented as both a teacher and community resource and I liken this to Collins's (1993) Black feminist notions of women as agents of knowledge. As a teacher and honorable elder, Doña Lola is in a position to influence her community and its cultural narratives. Here Anzaldúa questions the ways in which culture is defined by male discourse, and guides the reader towards a more matriarchal transmission of cultural knowledge: Women as cultural keepers through their "spheres of influence" and bodies of knowledge (Collins 1993).

Likewise, La Llorona is re-represented as a nurturing, mothering guide rather than an angry spirit. Far from a "bad woman or mother," she is redeemed as someone who helps and guides children rather than hurts them. In Anzaldúa's (2009b) poem, "Postmodern Llorona," the Llorona navigates complex spaces of identity, including cultural gender expectations and sexuality, and confronts her fears with defiance. Here, she was pivotal to guiding Prietita through the King Ranch to find the remedio she needed. Therefore, La Llorona is a spiritual guide listening to Prietita's heart and helping her navigate other dangerous spaces.

As a counterstory, Prietita y La Llorona effectively challenges cultural narratives that often exist around women's identities. It directly confronts the ways in which women as "agents of knowledge" are often delegitimized by Western epistemologies of objectivity. In the story, medical help is sought through a network of resources positioned within the community. Medicine and healing were situated within the family's network of resources and channeled through a female member of the larger community who was also a friend, teacher, and mentor. Through Doña Lola, Anzaldúa re-centers the idea of medicine as a cultural and community practice sustained by important "agents of knowledge." For some communities, these practices have become lost. Dominant discourses of Western medicine and modernization have delegitimized them, and also phenomenon like language loss has cut off the transmission of family cultural wealth from future generations. Anzaldúa is giving a voice to the experiential knowledge and cultural capital that Latinx families might possess and should continue to foster in their networks of community resources.

Anzaldúa (1996) also defies the narrative of La Llorona shared through countless generations. The underlying message of the story warns children not to stray too far from their homes or parents because they run the risk of encountering La Llorona, who is known to abduct children. Anzaldúa challenges that very narrative and re-represents La Llorona as a compassionate, nurturing, and helpful guide. Prietita's encounter with the ghostly spirit was a positive one, and left Prietita questioning what she had been told. She now has her own story, or experiential knowledge, to counter the dominant discourses that represent La Llorona as someone to be feared. It is possible that this counter-story complicates the traditional narrative of fear that parents tell their children to ensure obedience.

Counterstories: Classroom, Familia, and Beyond

Framed within the tenets of a critical race curriculum (Yosso 2002), the story of Prietita y la Llorona gives a voice to the experiential knowledge students bring from their homes. It legitimizes home experiences for students whose families use curanderas and/or natural home remedies associated with curanderismo as a source for healing. Additionally, this story challenges dominant cultural narratives and female representations, such as La Llorona, by providing an opportunity for students to question the origins of these ideas and how are they are complicated by the story.

Reading the story of Prietita y La Llorona also offered me a new perspective of my family history, especially regarding my abuelitas as "agents of knowledge." As a child, I watched them sobar and curar with great confidence in what they were doing. I listened to their stories sharing family history, remedies, and legends. As they have grown older and left the physical world, I am grateful for the opportunities I had to experience their storytelling and wisdom-sharing. Now, I am left thinking of how they learned their art through the storytelling of the women who came before them, like my great-grandmothers. The emergence of technology and Western discourse around medicine have overpowered the "home pedagogies" of marginalized groups rendering them primitive, even to some of the community members themselves. Likewise, the colonizing forces of English in the U.S. has effectively stripped generations from their home and community languages, and inter-generational relationships (Wong Fillmore 2000). In such a world, what does the continuation of these important bodies of knowledge mean for future generations?

Today's sociopolitical contexts necessitate engaging students in conversations that develop their critical thinking to question, challenge, and interrogate. With every coming day, U.S. society is having to grapple with xenophobic, misogynistic attitudes towards marginalized communities. Discourses, through language and culture, form a constructed knowledge of a racialized and gendered Other through representation (Hall 2008a). Therefore, whoever controls the image has authorship and voice over the identity that surrounds the representation. They define how the image is used, for what purpose, and for whose benefit (hooks, 1990). The "politics of representation" (hooks, 1990) are at the heart of issues over language, power, and discourse. Latinx writers assume their agency and experiential knowledge to contribute to the representation of the Latinx experience in English and Spanish. Anzaldúa, specifically, took this one step further by re-authoring the narratives surrounding La Curandera and La Llorona. She rerepresents La Curandera as an "agent of knowledge" and challenges a cultural narrative that categorizes La Llorona within the bad woman/good woman binary used to represent and define women. Anzaldúa is therefore an "agent of knowledge" herself as she challenges and repositions the experiences of those who historically have been silenced, unrepresented and dominated.

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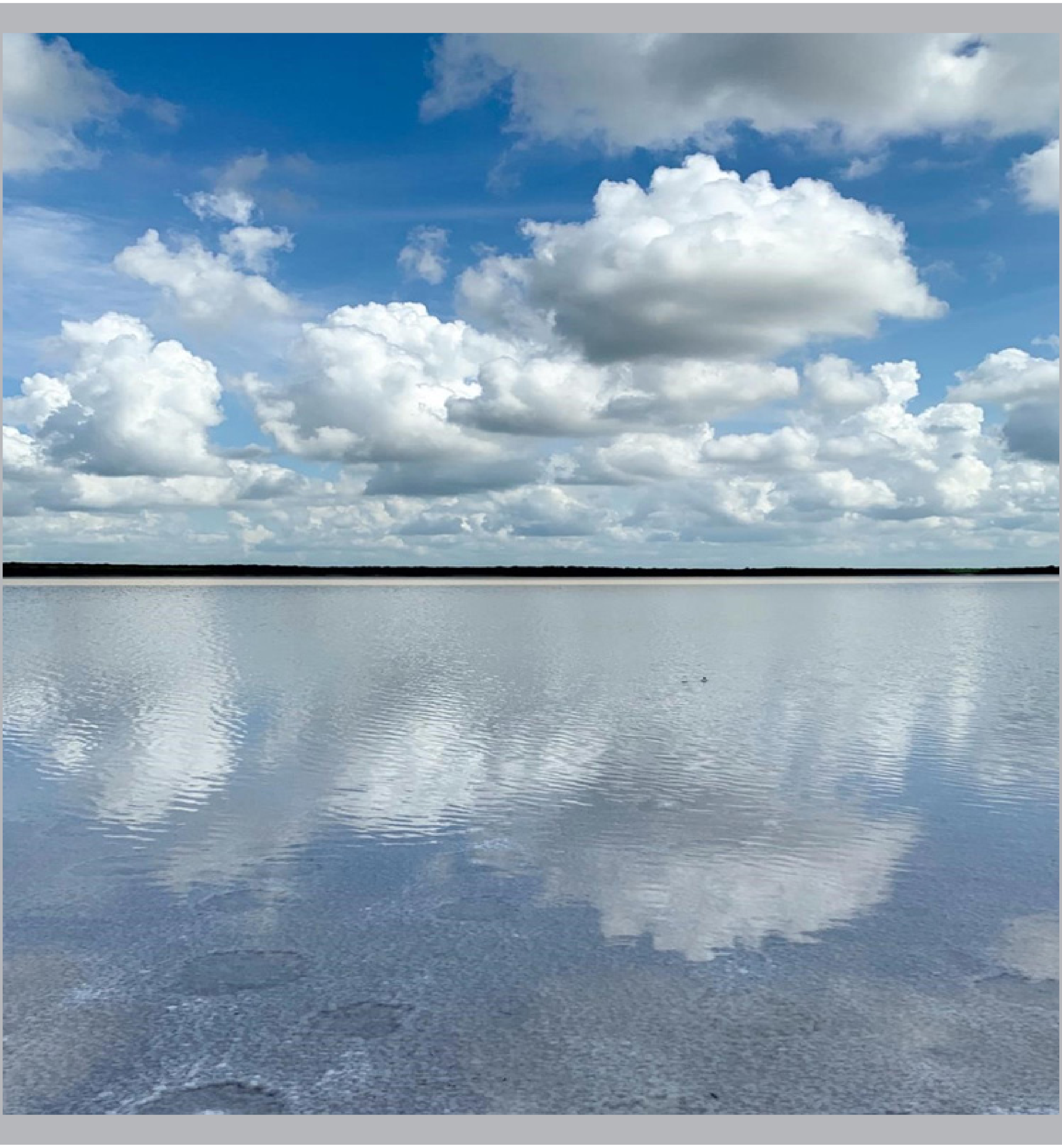

Photographed by Amanda Tovar

The Horror in Gloria Anzaldúa: Reclaiming the Monstrous

Orquidea Morales

I grew up hearing stories of la Llorona and el Cucuy, believing that la Mujer de Blanco was waiting outside of the bedroom window by the rosales to take me away. Today, like numerous scholars, artists and storytellers, I return to monsters of my youth. Inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa's work, I ponder what tools we can use to understand and survive in geographies built on violence, death, and conquest. Specifically, in this essay I argue that embracing the figure of the monstrous and the horrific provide one avenue for survival by helping create new homes and new familial structures. The U.S.-Mexico border has become a place where the value of human life is constantly re-signified and contested in popular culture.

> ***In "Del Otro Lado" Anzaldúa writes:***
> *On Feb. 2, 1848 a hatchet comes crashing down*
> *Severing her body, severing the land*
> *She bleeds. The blood becomes a river, El Rio Grande.*
> *They build a fence across her body, Mexico,*
> *A wall called el tratado de Guadalupe-Hidalgo.*
> *Thousands are sacrificed to the Barbed wall. (32-3)*

The line that now divides Mexico from the U.S. was one created through violent acts. The river itself is a bloody scene of sacrifices and monsters. To delve deeper into the horrors of the border I turn to the graphic novel Feeding Ground. Written by Swifty Lang and illustrated by Michael Lapinski, Feeding Ground is a graphic novel first released in 2010 in a six-part monthly series. This work was published in its entirety as a 2011 hardcover collection, which includes a foreword by award-winning Mexican (Mexican American) author Luis Alberto Urrea. Feeding Ground tells the story of the Busqueda family, living in a border town in Sonora, Mexico. Diego Busqueda, a noble "coyote," supports his family by helping undocumented immigrants cross the "Devil's Highway," an unforgiving desert where many people have disappeared and or died trying to cross. While Diego is gone, his wife Bea, his teenage son Miguel and young daughter Flaca are attacked by a local narco (drug boss) who attempts to rape Bea. To stop this attack, Miguel shoots and kills the narco, forcing the family to run in fear. Flaca, before the family crosses, is bitten by a stray dog. During their border crossing Flaca becomes increasingly erratic, sickly, and violent. In the end, Flaca turns into a werewolf, killing factory owner Blackwell and her father Diego. In the end Bea and Miguel are left to pick up the pieces of their lives now in the U.S. as the Blackwell vampires start a war with the U.S. border patrol.

The border is controlled by narcos (drug gangs), factory owner Blackwell, and the border patrol. Blackwell is the owner of a multinational corporation that also serves as a front for a werewolf breeding ground. In an early scene of the graphic novel, undocumented immigrants crossing the border with the help of Busqueda are lost and without water. However, they are stopped by men in full tactical gear who offer to help them and provide water if they go with them to Blackwell's factory. Busqueda warns the immigrants against it, but the men don't see any other choice since their options limited to dying on the border or being arrested by Border Patrol. The immigrants go with the men and end up joining Blackwell's army of werewolves.

Death and Horror

The above example illustrates how the U.S.-Mexico borderlands have been represented as a static geography of death, a death that marks not only the space but also the bodies that inhabit it. Death can be defined from different approaches, including mythology, theology, philosophy, physical, social, and political. The idea of what death is changes across time and of course across different cultures. The images of the dead and/or dying body set on the U.S.-Mexico border are influenced by layers of political, historical, social and cultural contexts. Demarcations between death and life, north and south, civilized and lawless are constantly played out in cultural productions about the U.S.-Mexico border. The equation, border = violent deaths, which constantly gets reinscribed in public discourse, affects the lives (and deaths) of the communities living in this space, marking them as disposable and destined to die violent deaths, their bodies more easily used for cheap labor.

> ***Sharon Patricia Holland writes:***
> *"Because these societal fears are pervasive, discussions of death, and notions of the dead, have the potential to dissolve barriers between communities. Speaking about death and the dead necessitates that critics move beyond familiar country and into liminal spaces. These liminal spaces are present whenever a scholar moves between the borders separating nations and communities, disciplines and departments" (149).*

Death and writing about death addresses the liminal spaces often ignored and hidden in conversations about the nation and national identity.

My own definition of death borrows from Holland's theory of how people of color are disposed of and dispossessed of their identity through how they die and are mourned. I understand death as both the physical (pain and absence of the body) as well as the metaphorical/symbolic (the collective death of communities along the border or rather how these communities are read as always already dead).

The dead or undead in this case, become less than human, expendable products to be consumed in the service of capitalism. What we do see in representations of the U.S.-Mexico border is the use of the dead (or dying) bodies of people along the border as cheap and free labor. The bodies on the border have been used as cheap labor in maquiladoras, or foreign owned factories.

For instance, through trade agreements such as Border Industrialization Program (BIP) (1964) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (1994), the U.S. expanded the reach of multinational corporations into Mexico. Low production costs in Mexico helped the maquiladoras extract labor and goods while at the same time keeping Mexicans out of the U.S. Mexican labor benefited the U.S. and other nations while Mexicans were forced to live in shanty towns without the necessary infrastructure to survive. The necrolization (marking of something as dead) of the borderlands in governmental accounts and cultural productions, is a reflection of the attempt to dispose of communities by exploiting their bodies for labor and resources and policing their bodies to the point of death. The NAFTA accords, along with growing neoliberal plans, caused many demographic shifts along the US-Mexico border. The rise in factories generated new migration patterns for women from Mexico and Central America. The growing population along the US-Mexico border forced people to live in undeveloped communities, many without running water or electricity. Alongside NAFTA, US governmental initiatives like Operation Gatekeeper made crossing the border harder, not just for immigrants looking for better jobs but for illicit activities such as the drug trade. The channels these different communities used to migrate from Central America to Mexico or from southern Mexico to northern Mexico soon began to overlap, causing new violence along the way. The creation of maquiladoras on the border began with the Border Industrialization Program (BIP) in the 1960s (Segura and Zavella, 12). NAFTA led to a rise in the number of maquiladoras as well as a restructuring of where they were located. Because of the lack of tariffs, the United States flooded the Mexican market with cheap goods, thereby limiting the ability of Mexican farmers and producers to compete.

The discourse that labels undocumented immigrants and to a larger extent anyone who looks Latina/o as criminals and dangerous can be viewed as coding communities of color along the U.S.-Mexico border as monstrous and abject, borders must be constructed to keep them out. Most importantly, this discursive strategy facilitates and excuses the violence perpetrated against Latina/os along the border by the U.S. government and by individuals. The border monsters are complex creatures that represent both the colonial gaze, which sees the “Other” as monsters and disposable labor. At the same time, these monsters hold unique meanings for the communities that are labeled as such. I would argue that by re-appropriating the monstrous identities we can decolonize these monsters and move them away from state sponsored discourses that equate monstrousness with a need for containment and exclusion. Rather, in this essay I turn to Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of shadow beast to highlight how inhabiting the monstrous is a necessary step to move forward and gain a new mestiza consciousness. This consciousness is tied to new definitions of family and home that embrace difference and monstrousness. Thus in a site where sponsored violence is separating families new familial structures can help rebuild temporary homes.

Mestizas, Monsters and Shadows

In her article “Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection” (1986) and her book The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, feminism, psychoanalysis (1993) Barbara Creed explores the theory of the monstrous-feminine and it’s applicability for an understanding of images of women in horror productions, particularly films. In the article, Creed explains “all human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject” (251). She adds that “the feminine is not per se a monstrous sign; rather, it is constructed as such within a patriarchal discourse which reveals a great deal about male desires and fears by tells nothing about feminine desire in relation to the horrific” (The Monstrous-Feminine, 70). Thus, Creed claims, women are monstrous only as constructed by patriarchy so that an exploration of their monstrousness tells us more about masculinity and the fears of patriarchy than anything else. Thus, a study of the monstrous in relation to the U.S.-Mexico border can explain how patriarchal structures, such as borders, are gendered constructs.

The concept of the monstrous-feminine is similar to Anzaldúa’s theorization of the Shadow Beast as well. In the introduction to Anzaldúa’s book Borderlands/ La Frontera; The New Mestiza, Sonia Saldívar-Hull explains how the feminist rebel in her is the Shadow-Beast, “a part of me that refuses to take orders from outside authorities” (Saldívar-Hull 38). The Shadow Beast emerges as the part of women that frightens men and causes discomfort. Girls in the borderland are commonly taught to fear sexuality and learn that men value women’s bodies only. The Shadow-Beast must be embraced in order to move forward and achieve a new mestiza consciousness.

Where Creed and Anzaldúa differ is because the latter pushes for not just an understanding and naming of the monstrous-feminine but the possibility that this monstrous figure is a necessary step in the path to a new consciousness. “Monstrous” then, is a process of “othering” in order to establish something as different and abject. The idea of the monstrous is tied to the concept of the abject. The monstrous is something(s) that pushes boundaries and become scary and threatening by demonstrating that those boundaries exist. As Chicanas, the monstrous is the “Other”, what we have come to hate and are afraid to be. It is the thing we fear in ourselves too, it is framed as primitive, intellectually weak, “dark”. Anzaldúa writes, “If a woman rebels she is a mujer mala. If a woman doesn’t renounce herself in favor of the male, she is selfish. If a woman remains a virgen until she marries, she is a good woman” (Borderlands/ La Frontera 39). Thus, for Chicanas, the monstrous identity is inherently linked to breaking of a social/cultural gender norm.

In Borderlands/La Frontera, and throughout her published and unpublished works, Anzaldúa points to various stages that must be crossed in order to reach concocimiento (knowledge). In “Now let us shift… the path of conocimiento…inner work public acts” Anzaldúa lays out seven stages to concocimiento: el arrebato, nepantla, Coatlicue state, el compromise, mending Coyolxuahqui, and new knowledge. (540-576) This process is never ending, cyclical, and non-linear. Anzaldúa argues that these stages appear unexpectedly and must be faced in order to move forward and grow. Living in one stage, she adds, leads to stagnation and spiritual death. Growth, in her theory, is painful and hard since so much of the work requires that we look within ourselves and face our monsters. Suzanne Bost explains “Anzaldúa’s representations of pain embrace corporeal fluctuations and displace the rhetoric of fortresses, defenses, and weapons. A theory of permeable identity-one that includes pain, death, and contact with otherness-would have no need to be so defensive. Opening subjectivity in this way could have positive political implications" (23). The pain is not romanticized in Anzaldúa's work, however, it is acknowledged as a real consequence of living between cultures and in sites of violence. As such, this pain allows for moments of recognition and connection.

This painful growth is something we see in Flaca. In the graphic novel Feeding Ground Flaca, a young girl, torn between two fathers turns into a literal monster, a werewolf, that must survive life without her family and home after she is forced to cross the border into the U.S. In Feeding Ground Flaca's resignation with her transformation is reminiscent of Anzaldúa's monstrous Chicana. Of the monstrous figure Anzaldúa writes, she "is a metaphor of displacement, the quintessential desterrada. She is the walking wounded, the fear and horror in our lives, the terror" (Borderlands/ La Frontera 20). Flaca is this desterrada, one without land, forced to move and leave behind family and home because of larger structures of powers and violence. But this loss of home and family that comes from transformation gives her access to new homes and the power to create new "monstrous" families.

The Border and Feeding Grounds

The graphic novel Feeding Ground uses the deaths caused by the US Border Patrol's Prevention through Deterrence strategy as a launching pad from which to create a border landscape not too dissimilar from the real one, except for the addition of werewolves. The title and cover art for the graphic novel Feeding Ground written by Swifty Lang and illustrated by Michael Lapinski provide a helpful synopsis of the story before we even open the book. The Dictionary of Environment and Conservation (3ed) defines feeding ground as a "place where animals feed naturally" (npg). In the graphic novel there is a clear attempt to address the causes of deaths on the border, particularly throught prevention through deterrence, border militarization, and neoliberalism. The theory behind prevention through deterrence is that if certain highly used crossing points along the border were more heavily policed, then immigrants would not try to cross. However, by cutting access to safer and more well-known paths, the US government pushed immigrants to cross using unsafe routes, leading to a rise in deaths. (De Leon 34-37).

With the title, Feeding Ground, the novel frames the conversation on institutional violence within one of nature and biology thereby pointing to how the geography is used as a tool of necropolitcs. I argue that labeling the border, or in this case the Arizona/Sonora crossing point as a "feeding ground" the graphic novel does two things. First, it plays on the ecological definition of feeding ground to reflect the way animals, in this case werewolves, feed in the desert. Two, this title shows how state sanctioned violence washies it's hands of border deaths by placing those deaths at the hands of the geography. In this case, whoever dies on the border or because of the border, is part of a natural feeding cycle, not a victim.

The cover of the first issue in the six-issue series foments this narrative and further pushes it into dangerous territory. On the cover of the first comic, Michael Lapinski illustrates a giant void with three immigrants floating over it. This cavernous void is both the landscape, the hills of the desert, and the mouth of a wolf. The jagged rocks turn into sharp teeth waiting for the immigrants to fall into its mouth. Behind the immigrants the bright yellow sun adds another element of danger, the possibility of dehydration and death. Thus, the crossing immigrants are faced with multiple threats including the supernatural werewolves that are part of the landscape. The geography is then merged with the built landscape to maximize the killing and suffering. Feeding Ground incorporates a maquiladora as a site where certain bodies are produced. Adding to the natural dangers of the border, such as the heat and lack of water, the border in the graphic novel is filled with immigrants-turned-werewolves working for Blackwell's multinational corporation.

Blackwell and his werewolves consume undocumented border crossers freely along the border, the border patrol does not punish them for their actions. These two entitites, the werewolf maquiladora and the border patrol work together to control and punish those that attempt to cross the border. Most interestingly, these werewolves are all undocumented men who attempted to cross the border and intercepted by Blackwell's army. In this way, the immigrant falls within two categories: the werewolf, a vicious animal unable to control his drive to feed on his own people or a nuisance that the border patrol labels as simply "crossers."

Through the narrative we learn that Blackwell preys on immigrants crossing the border, particularly those who are lost and in need of help. His security team finds these dying men and takes them to Blackwell's factory where they are either turned into werewolves or are used to feed these monsters. In her discussion of prevention through deterrence and life on the border, Roxanne Doty explains how "the raw physicality of some natural environments have an inherent power which can be put to use and can function to mask the workings of social and political power"(607). Doty's theory is illustrated in this fictional account of border violence we see the geography used by both Blackwell (a multinational corporation) and the government agents (border patrol) to control who and where people die.

In an early scene of the graphic novel, undocumented immigrants crossing the border with the help of Diego Busqueda are lost and without water. They are stopped by men in full tactical gear who offer to help them and provide water if they go with them to Blackwell's factory. Busqueda warns the immigrants against it, but the men do not see any other choice since their options are limited to either dying on the border or being arrested by Border Patrol. These immigrants are then turned into werewolves.

This encounter highlights the tension between Blackwell and Busqueda who stand at opposite ends of the spectrum. Busqueda is described as a good man who would do anything to help his family but struggles with the guilt of knowing he cannot save everyone who crosses the desert with him. On the other hand, Blackwell is a wealthy descendant of Spaniards who has set up a corporation that feeds off human life and desperation. Busqueda says Blackwell is not "digno" or worthy and Blackwell critiques Busqueda for being old fashioned and not working to leave poverty behind

From this novel, we learn that for decades Blackwell has picked up border crossers to turn them into werewolves or into food for his creations. The border patrol know that he is doing this, but make no effort to stop him because of his wealth and because they see him as aiding in the fight against undocumented immigration. One of them states "Blackwell pickin' up a couple of crossers now and then certainly didn't hurt our stats too much either" (76). Here we see a maquiladora or large corporation on the U.S. side of the border in Arizona. This machine thrives off people of color forced to relocate because of the economic conditions in Mexico, Central, and South America. The relationship between policing the border by government agents Border Patrol and the creation of forced labor by Blackwell) grows toxic as Blackwell's werewolves attack a local police station, declaring war on them. The theory behind prevention through deterrence is that if certain areas along the border, those that immigrants had commonly used, were more heavily policed then immigrants would not try to cross. (De Leon 31-32) However, by cutting off access to safer and well-known paths into the U.S., the federal government pushed immigrants to cross through unsafe routes leading to a rise in deaths. Scholars in anthropology and political science such as Wayne A. Cornelius, Madeliene J. Hinkes, and Peter Andreas have studied the complex relationship between militarization and the changing face of death among immigrants crossing the border. Andreas, for example, shows the cyclical nature of Prevention Through Deterrence which has created a "more organized" smuggling business "which has served to justify still tougher laws and tougher enforcement" (98). The increase policing and the shifts in crossing ports has created a vicious cycle that increases deaths but also increases the policing of the border. The Colibri Center for Human Rights reports that between 1998 to 2013 an estimated 6,330 people died while attempting to cross the border (npg). Again, the most interesting aspect of these werewolves is that they themselves are undocumented immigrants. The factory we see in Feeding Ground provides a nuanced representation of the border because it does not end in death or victimization exclusively. The werewolves, particularly young Flaca, are changed by the border machine but not killed by it. She is turned into a powerful monster.

The werewolves, particularly young Flaca, are changed by the border machine, but not killed by it.

Shadow Beasts and Monstrous Homes

In her unpublished dissertation found at the Nettie Lee Benson Library, Gloria Anzaldúa proposes the concepts of "La Llorona Complex" and the "Monstrous Chicana." In this text, she bridges psychoanalytic theory, horror studies and Chicana studies in her construction of and calling forth of the

Monstrous Chicana. Anzaldúa provides an interesting framework of how cross-discplinary fields such as film studies, horror studies, Chicana studies and feminist studies can be used to read and analyze cultural productions. Here I apply Anzaldúa's Monstrous Chicana theory on the character of Flaca to explore the possibilities of reaching conocimiento through embracing the monstrous.

Monstrousness is way to speak of dangerous feminine desires that threaten familial structures. In a patriarchal society, sexuality, particularly female sexuality, is one of the greatest and most feared taboos. Sex and death are an integral part of the horror film genre because "sexual behavior and its ultimate purpose, procreation or bearing of children, are quite clearly the antithesis of death. If one is to examine death, then one must examine sex" (Hogan xii). They are linked through the female body because women, through childbirth, are able to create life. Horror, then, is constantly concerned with a fear of women's bodies and sexuality that can "castrate" and threaten patriarchal structures. Worland writes that monsters are "a liminal figure, an uncertain amalgam or transitional form between living and dead; human and animal; male and female" (9). If we change the way the monstrous is read, we can allowschange the paradigm so the monstrous can also speak to feminine desires and different definitions of home.

In Feeding Ground we see the border personified as it speaks, "across my spine-the soles of men kindled an ache for flesh—I have stripped sandals and broke bone from boot—smashed wagon wheels and lapped blood from the links of chains—sucked marrow from the threads of tanks and I welcome every offering—yet I am still thirsty" (49). There is no guilt or regret just an acknowledgment of a never-ending hunger, one that feeds on anyone caught there. The border takes indiscriminately.

The border equates the victims as machines, as men and women who are forced to cross the border seem to not be part of the landscape's menu. Now this can be read in multiple ways. Perhaps the authors mean "men" in a general way; a universal, all-inclusive mankind. Perhaps the authors of Feeding Ground did not think of the growing number of women who cross the border, or perhaps they are influenced by Luis Alberto Urrea's Devil's Highway and other real-life stories. I want to propose another reading.

As the graphic novel progressed we learn that only men can turn into werewolves since the transformation would kill women. Flaca is the outlier, the only woman (or young girl) that becomes a werewolf. There is something in her blood that makes her special and unique. She is a young, innocent, mestiza girl strong enough to survive the transformation and be Blackwell's future heir. At the end of the graphic novel, Diego Busqueda, Flaca's human father, finds himself battling Blackwell, Flaca's monstrous progenitor, over her soul. Diego wants her to remain "human" and his "little girl." Blackwell wants her to set him free from the werewolf curse that has kept him alive since his participation in the Spanish colonization of Mexico.

Caught between these two figures is Flaca, Busqueda's young daughter whose body is slowly changing and morphing into something monstrous. Flaca turns into a werewolf and first kills her father Diego and then her creator Blackwell. Flaca, then, becomes the key to the future of the werewolf population. Flaca's monstrousness, i.e., her werewolf condition, is painful in that she is forced not only to kill her father but to leave her family behind. This condition was placed upon her by Blackwell; however, she does not fall victim. Rather, through her new-found power, she becomes a young survivor of violence on the U.S.-Mexico border. After the bloodbath, she emerges from the Blackwell compound, reborn, a new type of mestiza.

Flaca's uniqueness in being a mother figure to the werewolf clan is interesting. by reading them through a chicana feminist lens, particularly through Anzaldúa's concept of monstrous chicana, I argue that the border/body other actually creates a new type a home and belonging. Gloria Anzaldúa writes about an encounter with a student who though homophobia meant fear of going home. Anzaldúa theorizes homophobia as "Fear of going home. And of not being taken in. We're afraid of being abandoned by the mother, the culture, la Raza, for being unacceptable, faulty, damaged" (42). So if home is a site of fear and danger, particularly for those "atravesadas" or in between beings that don't fit in and can't/won't be accepted then how can we redefine home to include these atravesadas? The geography (borderlands) is reworked in Feeding Ground and in the end the fear of going home can be replaced by creating new homes or a strange destruction and reappropriation of these toxic homes.

There is a clear relationship between the female body and the geography. In the last page of the graphic novel, the speech bubbles for the border (black squares) merge with Flaca's round and white speech bubble. One finishes the other's sentences merging into one voice. Once turned into werewolf, Flaca leaves behind Blackwell's home, now overrun with werewolves fighting against border patrol agents. She lets these toxic agents destroy each other while she walks away to create something new through her monstrousness. (Lang 175).

The concept of the monstrous feminine shares similarities with Anzaldúa's theorization of the Shadow Beast. Sonia Saldívar Hull explains how the feminist rebel is the Shadow-Beast, "a part of me that refuses to take orders from outside authorities" (38). The Shadow Beast emerges as the part of women that frightens men and causes them to try to control and devalue female culture. Flaca can be read as the Shadow Beast that is "feared" by men because she has developed into a new, uncontrollable, creature. Like the border, the werewolf Flaca threatens to consume and contaminate anyone that comes in contact with them.

Of course, there is another side to the way the monstrous figure can be understood. The complexity of the monstrous figure creates a dystopic space where non-normative sexuality can exist. Women's constructed monstrosity is related to her sexuality, especially when that sexuality steps outside the borders of what is considered acceptable gender roles. Gloria Anzaldúa writes "to be monstrous is to be inhuman, not-human. A woman becomes monstrous when her lover/husband rejects her […] If a Chicana accepts and takes up her assigned gender role she is normal and good, if she does not she is abnormal and evil, i.e. monstrous" (Borderlands/La Frontera 19). Chicanas are constructed as monstrous only when they step outside of their role as daughter, wife and/or mother.

Representations of Latinas are outside whiteness and also outside normative views of femininity for white women. In regard to representations of Latinas in U.S. popular culture, Isabel Molina Guzmán argues that they are coded both as desirable and consumable. To fall within normative standards, they must police themselves and discipline their body. Molina Guzmán adds, "Latinas embody the twenty-first-century project of discipline, productivity, and docility through the ways in which class, race, ethnicity, and gender intersect in media discourses about them" (13). Thus, the representation of Latinas must fit within a specific standard in order to be consumable by the American audience. This privileges an approach to gender and sexuality that is heteronormative and universal.

The monstrous Chicana in Anzaldúa's work and in Feeding Ground is one that breaks the boundaries between self and other in moments of transformation and growth. Her identity is constantly in flux as she moves towards a new mestiza consciousness. Anzaldúa describes this process as one of amasamiento or kneading. She writes

Soy un amasamiento, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings. We are the people who leap in the dark, we are the people on the knees of the gods. In our very flesh, (r)evolution works out the clash of cultures. It makes us crazy constantly, but if the center holds, we've made some kind of evolutionary step forward (Borderlands/ La Frontera 102).

Flaca is this new evolutionary form, a girl turned monstrous by the violence of the border but who in turn uses this new identity to create new homes and new ways of being.

Conclusion—Monstrous Mestiza Futures

To many of us, the U.S.-Mexico border is more than a space where death occurs, it is home. I grew up seeing visually grotesque and violent images of the U.S.-Mexico border that circulated on the Texas/ Tamaulipas borderlands in the late 1990's and early 2000s. The border was imagined as a monolithic space of violence and death, particularly the Mexican side. As soon as you crossed the border, death was waiting for you. And not just any death, but a violent, grotesque death. Monsters lived in Mexico.

My focus on this geopolitical region or geographical region is personal and, driven by my own visceral response to representations that mark my home as dangerous, violent and dead. Through this reading of Flaca, I propose that a deeper understanding of the monstrous Chicana in Gloria Anzaldúa's work is necessary to begin a decolonization process by creating new homes and familial structures. Through the usurpation of the traditional familial structure by the monstrous chicanas (in this case Flaca) abjection becomes the norm, opening doors to dystopic homes where again the residents are not complacent subjects waiting for violent deaths but rather active participants in this strange borderlands world where danger is present but victimhood isn't the only path. Transformation pain and monstrosity are constantly used as tools to bring about change and create new familial structures.

In the graphic novel Feeding Ground the burden of creating new families and new homes fall on the Latina body, Flaca through their monstrousness (werewolf identity) which brings about change (violent as it might be) to the normative familial structure. This process is one of pain. Anzaldúa describes the transformation into a new consciousness as one .ladened with pain, loss, and change. "At first la nueva historia resembles Shelley's Frankenstein monster—mismatched parts pieced together artificially—but soon the new rendition fuels your drive to seek alternative and emerging knowledge" ("Now let us" 561). In the end, Flaca creates new homes and makes her own story as a reponse to trauma and pain inflicted on border dwellers. The graphic novel ends with Flaca, covered in blood, walking towards the reader. She states, "I am still hungry…". I would like to imagine that this hunger is not just her werewolf drive to feed but one for growth and change. Perhaps, as Anzaldúa has invited us to do, Flaca floating embraces the monstrous and makes new paths for herself and others border monsters. Through the image of Flaca as monster and the personification of the border, this text reflects Anzaldúa's call to embrace the monstrous and to create a dystopic new home for border dwellers where safety is not guaranteed but violent death and victimhood aren't the only options.

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Land of the Free

Arnulfo Daniel Segovia

i'm at war with myself, i'm at war with the world
brought the disease first then this hemisphere stole
and america can't stand the type of spic that i am
callin out 500 plus years of stolen land
send the guns and the vapors to make us good neighbors
reject everything and pay off all of the favors
don't move here, we don't need saviors
i pledge my allegiance to the creator

i try to change myself so i change the world
strange tho how i trade my soul for the dough
then at every show face the era of terror
like i'm paying off the dues for my oppressors' errors
trauma is human condition i consult the elders
smudge with the feathers beneath sweats and steeples
is there hope for the hood, or only rails and needles
i'd destroy everything but the fam's catching feels
so i'm seekin out the vision, back to the pyramids
you know what the mission is, consists of first
puttin food on the plate, a roof over the head
clothes on the back so that victory spreads
but there's a gun to my head speakin silver or lead
it's stifling my growth, i can't get ahead, it's said
when the student is ready, the master shall appear
well i was born ready, i'm here

the land of the free is for the sympathizers
made us first the foreman then the supervisors
they disorganized my people, made us advisors
still got the last names of our colonizers
the land of the free is for the sympathizers
made us first the foreman then the supervisors
they disorganized my people, made us advisors

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son of mesquite trees, king of the palm leaves
pourin 40s on the earth to peace out the deceased

venture decolonist and abolition ideologist

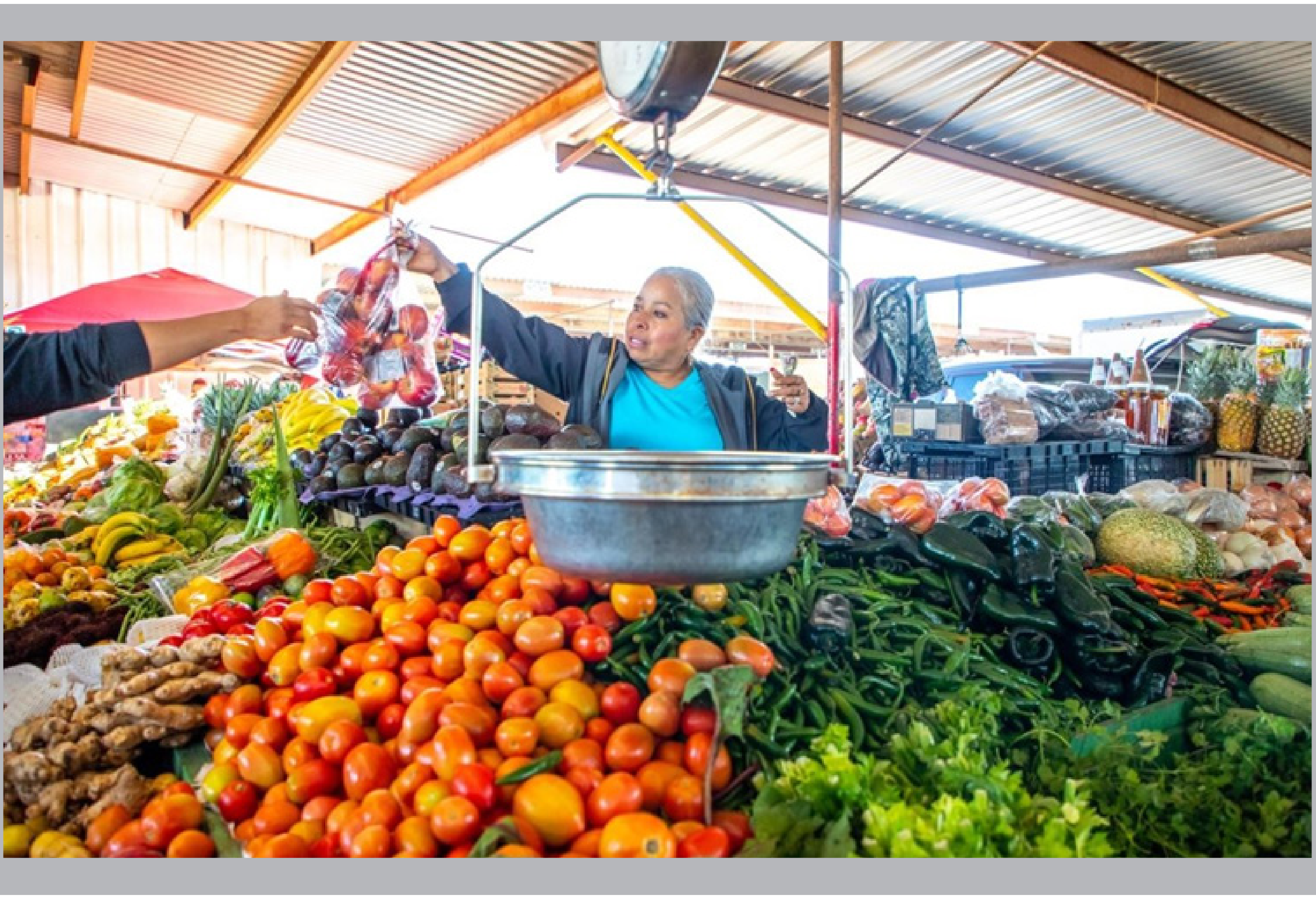
cleanse in a río bath before the warpath
and i speak wrath after i say my amens
don't owe offerings to the academy, the agony
of fools using masters' tools is old motto born to lose
i choose being true to myself, remove thoughts from bookshelves
if i'm being honest i'm tryna dismantle
if i'm being honest i'm tryna set the example of how
without the oppressed, there's no academy
that it's part of the whole in transcending nationality
you see the student has already become the master
at the end of this verse, i finish the chapter
walk away cuz liberation is what i'm after
i close the book to shook looks before i summon the hook

the land of the free is for the sympathizers
made us first the foreman then the supervisors
they disorganized my people, made us advisors
still got the last names, of our colonizers
the land of the free is for the sympathizers
made us first the foreman then the supervisors
they disorganized my people, made us advisors

i'm at war with myself, i'm at war with the world
brought the disease first then this hemisphere stole
and america can't stand the type of spic that i am
callin out 500 plus years of stolen land
send the guns and the vapors to make us good neighbors
reject everything and pay off all of the favors
don't move here, we don't need saviors
i pledge my allegiance to the creator

i This poem was previously published as part of Arnulfo Daniel Segovia's Master's Thesis Forgot My Tribe: Meditations on Hip Hop and La Frontera in August 2017.

Mercadome Flea Market and Alamo Dance Hall, Alamo, Tx.



Photographed by Arnulfo Daniel Segovia

A Chicano's Poetic Exploration: Usando mi autohistoria-teoría para ver los lobos, correr con los coyotes, y vivir como el zorro

E. Fidel Ramirez

I AM THEORY!

During the summer, the fans blew air all night through the house of my grandmother Concepción. Now, en la madrugada, the cool of the air made us shiver. My father, Lázaro, would begin with a shower and a shave, splashing Aramis aftershave on and rubbing Vitalis in his hair. Sally—my mom—would peel the potatoes, heat the pans and get the tortillas ready over the stove, gas burners adding a hint of odor to the still morning air. Despues de la primera taza de café, chorizo, potatoes, and egg tacos were wrapped in paper towels and thin sheets of aluminum. We would then venture out on the road. We were always awake hours before the chicharras began their morning screams and on the road before the sun was even peeking in to my grandmothers front windows. We would take US 77 North, never arriving at a place to stay, but pausing momentarily in our life journey (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Rivera, 1992).

As Benito had taught him in his youth as a migrant, this was how you traveled. I am not a migrant; however, my father's career in the Army required many moves. I learned from him early in life that you could traverse long distances in the dark morning while it is still cool. You can avoid the heat of the day, and extra stress on your car, with a stop in the early afternoon. Through conversation, sharing, cooperation, and exploration, together as pilot and navigator, we found our paths and arrived as a family; we developed our relationship on these travels. As we grew older, this relationship evolved. In our journey as educators, we have only ever taken one course together and never worked in the same department at the same time. Throughout our careers, we have continued to converse, share, cooperate, and explore. He is a partner on my every path (Jago, 1996). My most influential teacher (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2015), it is his guidance that encourages my persistence against the structure of education yet to develop an appreciation for learning and knowledge.

The path I now follow enjoins me as a disciple in academia. Primarily a teacher, I am now a faculty member in Mexican American Studies. The first and last faculty member hired solely for this teaching role at the University of Texas Pan American, I was also the first hired solely for this purpose at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. This is my path and destiny, the result of a childhood inspired by family activism that allowed this for me—mi apá y mi tío en el movimiento. I have my own path in activism—en la lucha por mis estudiantes, serving them as an academic and against the very same.

As a Chicano, I too must daily weave through a bullying and hegemonic structure that places borders to head off our progress in the academy. In opposition to the controlling structure of the Ivory Tower, my cultural and family foundations shape an ontology, epistemology, and axiology which attempts to rebuild the dismantled road to knowledge in a Chicano/Pocho stylism.

I ground this stylism in my axiological belief of service, an epistemological belief that this work is an investment in liberation, and that ontologically this work is about removing those walls to our advancement.

Just as Wordsworth used The Prelude, I here use poetry to explicate my life and work, changing both of us in the product and process. The poem below is the heart of my argument and the data around which I centered my doctoral dissertation. As leaders in the field of education, the future only has purpose and meaning if we are aware of our past. Through this poem, I take the privilege to dominate and declare both my position and purpose. It is my explanation of everything about me. This poem is a political statement about my identity, rejecting the limitations of our hegemonic society. Furthermore, it is a pedagogical tool which allows me to relate to my students and for them to relate to me, to understand that our identities are complex and that we are always in a process of discovery.

This poem encourages you who read to suspend your understanding of academia, shaped in a paradigm of scientism, and to value and study your own story in parallel with my own (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2015; Torres, Guajardo, Guajardo, & Ramirez, 2015; Wilson, 2008). As you will come to understand, I appear to reject everything we do in academia. However, I only reject the very elements of scientism, humanism, and scholasticism that would reject me. I am theory—my spirituality evolves from the culture of relationships (Wilson, 2008). I venerate my thoughts, the echo of internal discourse. Judeo-Islamic-Christianity precepts stipulate that at the dawn of human existence, there was only the Word, the dialogue of life. I therefore define my life in this form.

My epic poem provides a realization of a Chicano experience in higher education.

It is both humanizing and validates a different ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Brayboy, 2005; Kaomea, 2009; Kitchen, Cherubini, Trudeau, & Hodson, 2010). It is a means by which to displace Western Eurocentric ideologies and connect us, storyteller and listener, by privileging the relationship that exists between us rather than the information that is exchanged (Bishop, 2011; Smith, 2012). I am an academic and I am a Chicano, they are not mutually exclusive, and I exist in more than one place and more than one time (Cooper, 1987; De La Torre & Zúñiga, 2013; Ortiz, 1983; Willis & Murphy-Shingematsu, 2009).

I stumbled on the words of Corky Gonzales through my academic experience. I wasn't naïve to the poem but to the message. I had been ignorant though my choice to look at other works and to ignore the poignancy of the message in its method of delivery. But I took the poem and read it, several times. Many years ago now, speaking with my father about Corky I learned more about my father and his work in el movimiento aquí en el sur de Tejas. But these words stirred silently in my soul and my mind for years as an influence and key to my actions. It shapes my thoughts and has led me to a deeper understanding of who I am. More importantly, it gave me the framework from which to write my own poem, developed stylistically in the form of Yo Soy Joaquín. This is my homage and tribute to Corky and my own exploration of what it means to be Chicano today, in academia, as a colonized and decultralized man attempting to be, reclaim, and teach Chicanx studies in an environment that purports to support democracy and freedom but stands as the bastion of neither in the context of life today.

Ramirez

I am the word!

[I]

I am Theory,
absent from our statements of discovery,
trapped in the constraints of western hegemonic thoughts, I cogitate and
become obfuscated by… the freedom of research, No… suppressed
by standards, and destroyed by the graces of these freeing elements, by the desire to be.
Estoy perdido the map is wrong
the true path has been marked con pedacitos de tortilla,
do my nepantlero guides take me to my proper place – researcher? or to the proper place –
Researcher? turning from the path lit by Society I face Famine Turned from
the path lit by Society and I obtain desolation
I am Antonio Márez y Luna
I question, I am in place, of this place, for this place
To Forgive, to be forgiven, to examine or remain unexamined.
To consider justice or to be its tool? I see and learn to share what I know
I am the Bruja, I scream as the lechuza and draw the coldness in your blood
I am the Curandero to fight this battle, to win your heart and I stand to heal the rest
I leave the shelter of my mother, excited and sad
Standing at the crossroads I seek and give blessings

Soy Guálinto
Mi nombre… delivered in the diminutive,
in the Gringo style
I fight against it, taking the tack of pride in the cultural promises of the Spanish
moniker. Praised for jumping their hoops in the educational structure remanded to
second class status in their other realms. Pushed to accept Americanization to become gringo
también soy Joaquin
Progress and pride, Science and faith
peón y Bracero Deliverer and tyrant
Indígeno y mestizo
Present, past, and future
One in the tree of life
¡teoría en la carne!
y Esperanza
I am the urban dweller
I move from house to house
My hips ready, spreading, prepared to hold my child, I walk and practice
'horita, sentado con mi codo resteando,
peering through la ventanita
I see not what I have missed becoming
but what I become
I am unashamed as the boy under the house,
I have forgotten the period of time
I have remembered the separation
Who is calling I wonder,
Should I ask why instead?
I drank the water - no one else was there.
I remember so that my history is honored
I remember in reflexión - so I exist
y soy orgulloso que soy Benancio
I am the Bracero en santander
Experiencing burns in the desenraíze por la gloria de los gringos mendigos
In my political evangelism I am isolated by those closest to me - I fight against withdrawal.
Quiero a mi México lindo
Tengo mi amor aquí y no regresas
Pero mis hijos no saben dónde estoy enterrado.
I am that ghost that circles la placita
soy enamorado de mi angie luna,
her breasts – round, supple and large are nourishment and the promise of comfort
mi querida Mexicana
this is not a fiery passion that burns out it is the love affair of commitment she prizes my
heart and mind – keeps me teetering toward mi Atzlan more than gringolandia She accepts
my pochismos, im not gringo yet - for her I keep true.
and I am adored by Delgadina
I obey the struggle of power and love to know it, but reject it to love her more
I disobey the rules of man for the sake of her freedom from tyranny and abuse
I make others see the degradation and loss of abuse and subjugation which we
perpetrate on those we claim to cherish most
I bring intersectionality to the narratives creators
to know their privileges as males with a males language.
por los tres marias y por todos los hijos de La Chingada como yo,
estoy aquí haciendo este trabajo guided by Sor Juana's pen, weeping the tears of Tonantzin

my dismembered Coyolxauhqui
re-formed by Doña Marina Lola's value is constrained
by the self-deprecation Richard so happily displays

[II]

I am the coyote Beaner
Nepantlero
Pollito
Vendido
Patrón
Mexican-American
Soy
Gloria
Sofia, Minerva, Antonia, María y Richard
Dolores, Gerardo, Alfredo, Octavio y Rudy
Aída, Enrique, Guadalupe, Linda y Tara
Don Américo, Laura, Tomás, Angela y José
Marcos, Daniel, Eduardo, Enrique y Luis
Cherríe
I am the living flesh
subject not object
soy la frontera pláticas
ontología, epistemología, axiología y la metodología
Indoctrinated, eurocentric viewpoint marginalizes the Indigenous
Chican@ epistemology, I am legitimacy - I am steadfast
I am
when I, the Gachupín controls I
structure institutions and organizations,
I shape interactions between leaders and subordinates,
I dictate the perspective required of the studied and the researcher
When I, tlayacanqui relate to our people
We complement stability within the perceived disarray of life through
reflexión to recognize and practice the layers of shifting realities
obligated to respecting other beings within our community of relations.
Hispanic, I claim neutrality
I take no political stance on what is learned because one does not exist
What I know is applied to all
I now know what will happen and how to shape it
Native, I claim you, me, us, them, that, all
I take a stance that we are responsible to each other we make each other Safe - Sharing our
speech to move our hearts and Honoring our narratives with reliability we develop our mind,
heart, soul and spirit as one - I privilege our subjectivity
I have been studied and defined in western thought through the eyes of
Descartes, Horkheimer, Habermas, and Bell
The lens I use, still unfocused with earlier influence, improved when ground by
Delgado Bernal, Perez Huber, Solórzano, and Yosso
I know it is now more than the lens,
Brayboy taught me that light moves both ways and shapes my views accordingly Bishop,
Smith, and Wilson promoted a truth, viewed and viewer are looking at each other, simultaneously sharing roles.
I recognize systems of oppression – colonization
power

I privilege relationship rather than information exchanged
relating to each other and the world gives context to our stories
We seek holistic healing of the body, mind, and spirit
We share a process of critical reflection that emphasizes social adequacy and well being healing spirituality and privileging the sacred reality of life is a cyclical process rather than linear our existence is never final or complete but enters new iterations
Geertz told me to use thick description to learn, Spindler tells me to engage the dialogue of action, to reduce that dialogue to understand the culture But I am Garza, Reyes, and Trueba, I resist the hegemonic purpose to just understand, instead designing to cause change
I am Noblit, Flores, and Murillo, I have shared the importance of positionality and reflexivity I have been resisting since I was Francisco Tenamaztle and Fray Cristobal de las Casas. I continued to resist as George Sanchez and Ernesto Galarza
I am the mojadito who addresses colonization, liminality, positionality, and history
I resist to privilege story, plática, yarns, narrative, and dialogue to teach and know My resistance is what makes my work of value
I come from the frontera, a third space marginalized population and "othered" Mi historia privileges not the western textbook pattern of knowledge transference, instead my spiritual and indigenous ways of knowing
I privilege my relationship with my parents, for what is important – a good life family values and responsibility to previous generations and older siblings…

Ramirez

creates the foundation upon which the humanity of the individual is shaped
I am the process and product of research.
I am the word made flesh, the producer of speech by which I now shape the narrative
A resident of the land I was treated as an illegal in gringolandia
Now in the reclaimed Aztlán of my people I reject the white dominant perspective On the importance of the process of data collection,
de la axiología de mi gente, the perspective of the human condition is most important
It is with this ethical guideline in place that I serve as an emancipatory tool para mis colegas, para mi familia, y para mi comunidad
ontología
power differentials due to location, ethnicity and immigration status epistemología
knowledge acquisition leads to liberation and voice production axiología seek not to just identify what exists in the nature of study, improve the context in which the data is collected, remove barriers that exist, and seek justice
metodología
testimonios draw the researcher and participant together
testimonios, extend beyond the life history to the perspective of the participant testimonios are an educating of the researcher and reader testimonios are the means by which the participant is empowered and change occurs; testimonios decree awareness of self in the environment and voice to express that awareness testimonios expect the participants to change the environment testimonios are an academic text framed within scholarly literature and with a critical analysis
I am on a new path, academic and Indigenous
I must therefore know
I am Don Miguel Ruiz and my questions take me to a new plane of existence
I therefore ask,
What are the sources that shape my views on social justice and educational equity?
What are the sources that shape my identity?
What attributes of my identity do I use to shape my educational persona?
I ask and I answer
Bias - western ideological conceptualization of relational activities deemed harmful my paradigmatic perspective - beneficial
I dance with my subjectivity rather than to skulk in the darkness of a veil of objectivity.
Epoché? I cannot deny my existence, deny my mind, deny… I?

Testimonio? I am the privileged component, I am the life experience I am the word and the knowledge and I am the value Excludes rigor as dialogue?
why believe what is presented? reality, goodness, likelihood, sufficiency, trustworthiness, believability, and credibility VALIDITY!!!!
verity in regard to reality
VIABLE INFERENCES FROM THE DATA !!!! GENERALIZATIONS DUE TO EXPERIMENTATION!!!!
These are fundamentals of a different era and means of knowing So then trustworthiness?
I am theory, I am story, am I not trustworthy? Is my experience not reality?
I am truth, I am the way, I am the message and I am the storyteller I am guided and a guide
I am encouraged by the dialogue and the need to understand
Together you and I seek understanding of this
Together you and I corroborate this story
Together you and I trust in the process
Together you and I determine la verdad
Marc, they ask, how can you say this is research? I tell you seeking justice is academic integrity.
¿De verdad? ¡Por supuesto! when we put people first in our minds and actions
La Justicia sí existe It is a political movement!
Triangulation
Three views to see the same concept We therefore all agree?
Crystallization
Multiple views to see the same concept clearer More of us agree?
Like the molcajete, we break our contents to create a new product
The process brings together product in a new fashion, better and more complete - holistic
Together we reject the trinity Instead we will venerate in the light of the stained glass mosaic, como las guadalupanas.
Juntos, construyendo un mosaico much brighter que la Cueva de los Cristales,
Our mosaic springs from our axiology y juntos… we recognize our narrative as truth when
Our pláticas testimonios, y cuentos are political and illuminate hegemony, When we value varied ways of knowing and both story and academic prose reflexión in a pocho/mojado/Chicano way of knowing truth and respect are one and the same, relationships are primary,
we do not exclude others from a similar dialogue that is just as valuable. to the problems of our people, we pay attention so that as we study we improve our community
en el Teatro de la Reforma,
our story is presented to the world as we challenge what we think we know about our relationships with each other. Then, usando corridos, novelas, y cuentos we retell our story in el teatro campesino, en las escuelas, y también en la casa. We change the world we see and how we are seen
We don't limit ourselves to the construct of validity We enrich ourselves through the concept of truth
I reject conformity through this tool… the Purpose of the standard we create exists
Only in the context of our dialogue as We shape the narrative
Our value, my value… I am of value Because we understand each other, a Truth
exists, and I pursue it righteously
I, product, do not intend to be transferred to other forms of I or you. We though Are each invited to consider how I and you
Exist as one separate and one together

[III]

I am the colonizer,
I am the minoritized and the prominent
I am the colonized
I am Lisa, Ernesto, Sergio, Olivia, Gonzalo, and Adriana I am Michelle, Jose, and Dagoberto
I am Don Quixote de la Mancha, Joaquín, y Pancho
I am Jacinto Treviño, Juan de Oñate, and Jose de Escandón

Soy Benito, y también el padrecito Hidalgo
me dijeron a mí, levántate … Soy Lázaro, risen from the death
To new life… an academic
Performing duties for which my savior has in store for me
For the sake of being
… A protestor, yes

To the streets and passages with marks of engagement
But just as importantly being the bridges and pathways with my heart and mind and words
at this moment taking new and old and … soy Chicano
en mi sangre y con cada aliento de aire que respiro
I know the masa of the north winds and the nixtamal and sulfur of the south
Beguiled by the orange blossoms of the west and sooted with the sugar cane ash from the east
I am in simpler terms, con o sin safos, The rascuache academic
I am Chicano!

We belong here in the academy; we belong in this microcosm of society just as in any other. In remembrance of Corky, de la lucha, del movimiento, this is my revolutionary cry, mi grito, to call upon my peers to join me in the quest to reclaim the spaces that are our lineage and systems of learning, to be Indigenous Chicanos of one community (De La Torre & Zúñiga, 2013). A new revolutionary rallying cry por nuestra raza, por nuestra gente to the academy (De La Torre & Zúñiga, 2013; García, 2010; Gunckel, 2016). I share with you this poem as my adobe brick on the road to Atzlán, experiencing El Plan Espiritual, clarifying an epistemological discourse and my pedagogical and political frame of reference as faculty (Calvo-Quirós, 2016).

As the rascuache academic I leave you with this: ¡Soy teoría – Soy la palabra – Soy Chicano!

This poem was previously published as part of E. Fidel Ramirez's dissertation, Existing con el Lobo, Traversing la Frontera con Mis Nepantla Coyotes, y Buscando la Vida del Zorro: An Autoethnographic Exploration of a Chicano in Academia in 2017.

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A Fronterizo Father: (Con)Viviendo en los mundos del otro lado

E. Fidel Ramirez

ABSTRACT

This memoir-like essay highlights the disruption of a relationship between a father and a son on the Texas-Mexico borderlands which is caused by immigration status, education, class, sexuality, and type of communication. The essay begins in a contemporary and key moment that transports the author to analyze his relationship with his father and pinpoint what it was like to grow on both side of the Frontera simultaneously. With the hopes of achieving the American Dream, the father of the author tries to fulfill the role of the breadwinner without realizing that the lack of nurturing language and not being able to live in the same country affected the relationship and the emotions of his child. This essay serves as a reminder of the psychological and emotional trauma that people on the borderlands endure in order to survive while being critical of the various geopolitical and social structures influencing these relationships. This essay aims to open conversations about the importance of fatherhood and fathering on the borderlands as a phenomenon, especially when the fathers fulfill this role while being physically and emotionally absent from a child's life.

KEY WORDS: *Fronterizo, Fatherhood, Masculinities, Borderlands, Intersectionality*

"So what about your father? Is he in the picture?"

A professor asked me this question in 2016 as we were driving to work at a coffee shop in Windsor, Canada. He was surprised that I was only speaking about my mother and was curious to know if I had a father. This question, born out of curiosity, carries much significance today, especially on the border. As we have seen for some time now, Latin American families continue to be separated by U.S. immigration policies. Our most recent mass displacement involves children who were sent for brighter futures, but have been physically, emotionally, and spiritually detained in Brownsville, Texas, a border town; "the Border Patrol said close to 200 people inside the facility were minors unaccompanied by a parent," (ABC News). The opening question of this article becomes relevant to not only me, but also many fronterizos whose parents live or have lived on the other side of the border while they came to the United States for this same brighter future.

Although I will never understand the emotional and psychological trauma of being detained as a child for a "crime" I had no intention of committing, my story, like many other fronterizos, regarding family separation is not unfamiliar to border crossers. The history of Chicanas/os on the borderlands being stripped of their families is unfortunately a common occurrence since the early 20th century: "one of the dramatic events of the 1930s was the repatriation of large numbers of nonnaturalized Mexicans and some American citizens of Mexican descent," (Meier and Ribera 1993, 153). One might even claim that the first accounts of this dehumanizing tradition of separation go back to when "the border fence that divides the Mexican people was born on February 2, 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo," (Anzaldúa 2007, 29). These separations, rooted in the political targeting of the borderlands, have happened for over a century due to our problematic and discriminatory immigration policies. My lack of reflexivity and understanding of these larger governmental systems impacting the border, at the time, led me to answer the question by saying, "My father and I don't have the best relationship."

In this brief essay I aim to explore my relationship with my father, which was formed across the divide between his residence in Tamaulipas, Mexico and our home in Texas where I have spent most of my life with my mom and brothers. Aside from this separation, immigration policy, socioeconomic status, and education have all disrupted, and sometimes temporarily severed, my family bonds. Thus, this memoir-style essay is inspired by Chicana feminist epistemologies such as Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's Theory in the Flesh; "a theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity," (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015, 19). Through this theory, I underscore the memories of my father and me as a vehicle to highlight developing masculine kinship on the border as we lived on both sides simultaneously. I particularly focus on my relationship with my father, both of us men, to understand the ways in which communication and love between a father/son is disrupted.

I focus on men because there is a gap in literature concerning male kinship and masculinity on the borderlands, especially fathers and sons who live in these border spaces. I identify my relationship with my father as semi-absent. He was physically present on the weekends, and he was financially supportive at all times. I also highlight sexuality to understand the pressures of performing masculinity on the eyes of a heteronormative father. This helps us think about the disruption of traditional Mexican male roles as they lead to other factors disrupting kinships.

I consciously engage in this topic from a critical perspective as a queer Chicano de la Frontera, from the Texas-Mexico border, especially after reading Brother, I'm Dying (2007) by Edwidge Danticat while studying blurred genres with Ruth Behar. Danticat inspires me to think about the way in which, as a writer, I can weave the voices and experiences of my loved ones in order to situate them in larger context. Behar teaches me about the way in which I map my memories and give life to the people and the experiences I am trying to honor. In this case I use my voice and knowledge to interpret the lived experiences of my father as I witnessed them and gathered his testimonio years later.

My identity—first generation, Chicano, male, queer, fronterizo, and doctoral student—has allowed me to connect to the border in complex ways. I use fronterizo as an identity, in this essay, to stray away from Chicano or Mexican American and to talk about a person that travels and resides on both sides of the border whom is affected by both sides simultaneously. This has also allowed for me to see the way in which my father's identity—Mexican, male, heterosexual, working class, and from a farming family— informs his practices and beliefs when providing for his family.

I am particularly interested in the way in which intersectionality "has historically been applied to intersections of subordination. Recently, however, it is being used to study contradictory intersections, for example, when one social category (say, male gender) confers privilege and the other (say, nonwhiteness) is the basis for subordination," (Hurtado and Sinha 2016, 34). Through this contradiction of privileges, I view the way in which privilege somewhere can become oppression elsewhere; for example, being born in Mexico my father has a privilege that ends when his family migrates to the U.S. Therefore, in this essay I ask, how was my relationship with my father disrupted on the border? What factors impacted our family politics? And how can I understand fronterizo fathering from a perspective of radical love? I approach these questions by weaving memoir and historical accounts that navigate the economic, geographical, linguistic, emotional, and familial separation that my father and my family has endured to survive border separations.

To Father desde el otro lado

To understand the role of my father within my family, I begin by asking, what does it mean to be a father en la frontera? I think of my father as a padre and not a father, for he does not speak English and was born in Mexico. In Spanish padre has associations with the roles of being a man who has children or of being a priest; padre cannot be used as a verb. English, however, has at least seven definitions of fathering as an action. The broadest of these characterizes it as "perform[ing] the tasks or duties of a male parent; act[ing] paternally," (Dictionary.com). In Spanish, fathers hold responsibility and an identity that are fulfilled by assuming the male role in the familial relationship.

The father role is popularized with duties such as the breadwinner, protector, or leader of the family. However, in many cultures such as my own, the Mexican, fathering can be both a mixture of positive (financially responsible and protector) and negative (not knowing how to communicate with your children) attributes, “those with closer ties to Mexican or Latino culture and a lower socioeconomic status more often stressed being responsible and being a good provider over ‘spending time’ or ‘being a friend’ to children in their evaluations of the important components of the father role,” (Mirande 1997, 115).

I describe my father as a fronterizo father because fronterizo describes the experience of the coming and going and the uncertainty of building a stable family on one side or the other from the border. The fronterizo complicates fathering in a way that is affected by language, culture, geography, and citizenship.

The Road to Fatherhood

My father Sergio Barrera was born on July 4, 1966. He was born in my grandparent’s house in la Colonia Benito Juárez in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico, delivered by a midwife. His family called him Checo, and many years later, when he had his own businesses, he became Don Checo to his workers. He is the ninth child in a family of twelve, the youngest male. My grandparents had two houses: one in the city and the other on the ranch, both poorly made and with dirt floors. The rooms had four small beds, which had to sleep twelve children. They lived in the city house Monday through Friday so that the children could go to school, but Friday afternoon they would go to the ranch. My father and his siblings would take care of the sheep and cows as they were means of income. As a teen my father began milking goats and cows and helping my grandmother makes food to sell throughout other small ranches.

At the age of fourteen he finished middle school, but did not continue to high school. He wanted to be a physical education coach, since he was athletic and loved to swim, so he went directly to a university-like school in which he completed a physical education certificate. They did not require a high school diploma. On the first day he attended, he did not know that he needed to athletic wear, nor did his parents have money to buy him some. Everyone laughed at him because my dad showed up in jeans, a button-up shirt, western style hat, and boots. The teacher did not forgive his attire and made him exercise in boots. He tells me laughing, “nunca más me llevé las pinches botas,” (never again did I take those damned boots).

In 1986 his first trip to the U.S. occurred. He came to Florida to work picking peaches during that summer. He recalls being under the sun for long days, drenched in sweat and burned by the sun. At this time he was nineteen years old, and it was his first time away from his parents. Due to their poverty and the size of the family, they had never eaten peaches. During one of their work breaks he ate many. The juice of the sweet peach rolled down his cheeks and hairless chin. He was in peach heaven. But a couple of hours later his stomach began to ache; he had diarrhea. Shortly after, he and his sister began to feel homesick while looking at the stars, and they packed to return to Reynosa. They did not finish the picking season.

At age twenty-one, in 1987, he joined the local police department because he wanted to be a police officer. During the same time period, he met my mother at the bailes at the Congregación Garza at the Charco Escondido. The Charco Escondido was the ranch where my mother and her family lived and owned a house. My mother’s father had donated a piece of land in the corner so that the community could build a church. This congregation held a contest to choose the “Reina de la Iglesia” of the community, and whoever could raise the most money selling food and drinks for the church would win. My father’s youngest sister Gaby was running, and their family was selling food to raise funds. During the day the participants and their families would sell food and also race horses and at night they had big bailes. My father met my mother, Mayra López, since they both loved to dance, at the community bailes. Later that year, my mother went with her family to a quinceañera, where she found my father and his family; they danced throughout the entire night.

My mother worked at a video store, and my father would go to rent movies for his sister Gaby. On one of those nights, my father took my mother home after work, and he asked her out. My father earned his allowance by selling tamales every week, and with that money he could take my mother out on dates. My parents dated for a year and a couple of months, and then got married. On March 19, 1989 my mother wore a simple beige dress, and my father was wearing a navy-blue western suit with a white hat and boots. Their wedding was held in my mother's living room. The wedding was small because my father's uncle had passed away not long before, and his family were still mourning. After the wedding, my mother thought that she was going to get a honeymoon; instead, my dad bought them their own small house. It was a one-bedroom house, and my mother recalls going to sleep on a mattress that had metal bedsprings coming out of it. Her wedding night ended disastrously, when she cut her calf with one of the springs. She was bleeding and crying. Now when she describes that night by jokingly says, "Se fue de luna de miel a luna de sangre esa noche!" The honeymoon changed that night to a blood moon.

In 1991 my parents had a carnicería, a meat market, called Carnicería México. Later, they acquired a bigger meat market that also had a tienda de abarrotes, a grocery store, called "J y R." In 1992, the year that I was born in, they built a bar, where my dad currently works. They also added a casino infantil (party rental place) and some apartments. Fast forward to 2003: my father moved to the U.S. because crime in Mexico increased.

Staging Unwilling Separation

My parents began their vision of the "American Dream" when they visited the U.S. for the first time and they compared the lifestyles in Mexico and in the U.S. My mother used to visit the U.S. with her aunt who would spoil her. Therefore, my mother's thoughts of the U.S. were associated with materiality. She loved that they could drive on paved roads, go shopping in air-conditioned stores, and sleep in a house with air conditioning. My father, on the other hand, as previously mentioned, came to the U.S. to work; therefore, his thoughts were fixated on the wages despite it being arduous work, the ability of reaching out to medical or law enforcement help, and the cleanliness of the streets and businesses. Through similar, but also distinct, points of view, my parents thought about what made the U.S. better than their homeland, and when my mother was pregnant with me, there was no doubt that I would be born in the U.S.

I was born in McAllen, Texas in 1992, after my mother had spent several days sleeping on the floor of my aunt's house. My father decided to remain in Reynosa, until it was time for my mother to go into labor. Then my family went back to Reynosa. In 1996, my brother Erick was born in the same way; my mother slept at my aunt's house, and my mother had planned to return to Mexico with him after his birth. Howeverk, Erick had bronchitis as a newborn, and he needed medical assistance in order to breathe. The doctors told my mother that he might not live much longer and that he needed urgent medical care. At the same time as my brother's illness, my father began to look for places to build a home in Pharr, Texas. In 1997 the Rio Grande Valley was predominantly farmland, extremely different from the economic blossoming we have witnessed recently. The same year my father began building our home.

Our house took over a year to build. My father earned Mexican wages in Reynosa and then had to convert them to dollars. The economic disparity was enormous. The peso had more value in 1996-1997—the years in which he was building our house—than it currently does. According to the Macrotrends website, a dollar was worth between 7.4 and 8.2 pesos in 1996-1997, and a 2018 dollar can be exchanged for 18.59 pesos. The peso hit a record low of 21.58 in January of 2017. Despite that, we can see that ever since Salinas de Gortari, a Mexican president from 1988 to 1994 responsible for drastic economic shifts, and the North American Free Trade Agreement signed in 1994, "the devaluation of the peso and Mexico's dependency on the U.S. have brought on what the Mexicans call la crisis," (Anzaldúa 2007, 32). This devaluation affected our family due to the fact that my father, even in 2018, continues to work in Mexico and earn pesos, which we later have to convert to dollars to sustain our home in Texas. Therefore, money has been more difficult to acquire. As a family, we have learned to appreciate and understand our economic differences living in two countries. In Mexico we could be having a middle-class life, but in the U.S. we continue to struggle to pay the light bill.

While I was in first grade, in 1998-1999, we slept on a mattress on the floor of my aunt's living room, so that I could claim her address and attend school in Texas. From the time I was in first grade, we lived in Texas with my aunt from Monday to Friday, then left for Mexico on Friday afternoon, and came back Sunday night or Monday morning. I remember my mother waiting outside Palmer Elementary in Pharr, Texas many Friday afternoons. She had been anxiously waiting for us to return to Mexico, like every weekend. She would tie the rod that would hold the army green shower curtain in her bathroom to the back of our truck and would hang it with our clothes. Sometimes she would even have my father's clothes since she would bring them to wash, dry, and iron before returning them to him on the weekend.

Ever since I was a child, crossing the border meant seeing my father. I associate crossing el puente, the bridge, with seeing him in Mexico. I also associate the colorful enlarged butterflies on top of the "Pharr International Bridge" sign as a symbol of our return journey and the fact that he could not come to visit us in the U.S. Although many people in Mexico know the common phrase el otro lado, the other side, my other side was Mexico and it was a reencuetro, reunion, with not only my father but also Spanish and my homeland.

My brother Erick and I resented my father for staying behind. Many times, I cried because I did not want to leave Mexico because that meant that we would not see him for over four days. I would ask him why he would not go to Texas more often, since by the end of my first grade year we were living in our own house, but he would always say because of work, "por el trabajo, m'ijo!" I will not say that my father never went to Texas to spend a night, but the times that occurred were slim in comparison to the times that we crossed the bridge to go to him. Crossing the bridge became something we got used to quickly, but we never understood where home was. Was home where I lived during the week to go to school, or was it where my father lived? I could not say that home was where we had a house because we had one on each side of the border. As a child, I did not understand the complexity of my fronterizo identity.

As my brother and I grew, our relationships drastically changed when we went to Reynosa. It was not enough to just see him because many times we saw little of him. Since my father ran a billar, a bar, the weekends were his busiest and longest workdays. Therefore, every weekend my father would give us money so that my mother could take us to the movies or somewhere else. Sometimes, he would go out with us on Sundays, but if he did, we then had to wake up earlier on Monday to cross the bridge in our good clothes and ready to be dropped off at school.

Going to Mexico became less about my father and more about going to the ferias, palenques, plazas, and sometimes de paseo a Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, a neighboring state to Tamaulipas, where my father lives. Since we were fine with that, it became a way for my father to keep us happy and entertained and also out of his way so that he could work efficiently and make enough spending money to give my mother to last us through the next week in the U.S. Not having my father present for five days out of the week and having him for only a couple of hours during the weekend meant that I never fully knew my father. I knew that he worked at a billar. I knew that he liked to bet money during las carreras de caballos, horse racing, and peleas de gallos, cock fighting, but he was always a mystery to me.

This mystery distanced me from my father especially because I was not as attracted to the bar and gambling as he was. I did not enjoy going to his parent's ranch because it was too hot to be without air-conditioning, and we did not enjoy playing in the dirt, something that he would tell us to do with our cousins. I preferred to be indoors, coloring on the floor or painting, but in Mexico that was never a possibility. He wanted me to be outdoors, and I wanted to continue the things I would do while I lived in Texas. My mother in Texas did not allow us to be outside, talking to strangers, playing with dirt or on the street. My mother became my role model—the one from whom I learned everything sincw we lived with her most of the time. She would show up to our awards assemblies, attend my dance performances and help us with homework. My father, on the other hand, would tell me not to be a faggot "no seas maricón," when I would tell him I did not want to ride the pony he had purchased for my 8th birthday. He would say stop acting gay, "deja de andear joteando," when all I wanted was to be dancing to the music of popular novelas for children like Complices al rescate and Aventuras en el tiempo. These insults hurt me profoundly. As a ten-year-old, I had just fallen in love with dance and I saw that as an artistic for of expression that brought joy to not only my mother but also others that watched me perform. My father rarely saw me perform and as a child I never knew if it was because he did not have the time or he did not want to see me dance with other girls on a stage.

These unkind words that I heard many times as a child scarred me and I began to build walls near him. Every time I would see him there was a voice in my head that would remind me of my queerness as a child. I did not want to speak to him because my mannerisms were very effeminate and I felt monitored at all time. As a result, I spoke to him less because the things I had passion for, he did not approve. I especially found it shocking when my mother told me that they had met dancing because that was my passion. Except I never danced with girls when I performed, I only danced next to them. In All about Love bell hooks states that "many men in our culture never recover from childhood unkindnesses," (hooks 2000, 23). She references the African American community, but I also relate to this as a Chicano because the abuse that I was endured as a child took me many years to come to peace with. Often times I thought, maybe if I had been raised in Mexico I would have been manlier or straight for I would have had my father to look up to instead of just my mother. Sometimes I questioned if I would ever make him proud because I did not like the ranch lifestyle or anything outdoors like he did and our taste in music and clothing were different.

Despite this psychological trauma through his insults, I knew that there was something that I could always get from my father: money. If I needed something for school or clothes, no matter how effeminate it was, he would not think about it. If he would not give it to me, then my mother would work her magic so that I could get what I wanted, even if the request seemed absurd. My brother Erick and I began seeing my father more as a walking bank than we did as someone who was supposed to be a male role model. The language that we spoke as father and sons was not one of love and kinship but rather one of money and materiality.

To further complicate things, there was also the fact that our communication was disrupted once I began to acquire a second-language in elementary school. At first, I was labeled an LEP (Limited English Proficiency) student, and when my classmates found out about that my classmates listened carefully to the way I spoke with hopes of finding something they could mock. I was placed in the Dual Language Program at Pharr-San-Juan-Alamo Independent School District, in which I learned English and Spanish at the same time. This later became an advantage because I would complain about my father to my younger brother while my father was in the room since I knew he would not understand us. However, I began to know more English than I did Spanish. After all, the exams that we took in order to advance to the next grade level were always in English.

The Spanish that we began to learn was on the formal side of the spectrum and the teachers were aware of how we spoke at all times. Although I knew the working class Spanish of border dwellers, I strayed away from it as the school prepared us to be fluent in the more formal vernacular; colloquialisms were not part of the curriculum. My father, because he left school at age fifteen, had an extremely colloquial Spanish. He would use maldiciones, bad words, and things that only people with ranching backgrounds knew. For example, he would say, "Me duele la paleta," which in English translates to "my lollipop hurts." What he wanted to say was, "me duele la scapula," or the shoulder blade. He never knew the difference, but I did, and as a child I would correct him. I knew that he did not approve of my queerness but I would not think twice to let him know that I did not approve his Spanish. I corrected him many times but I knew that he was not going to change. However, by correcting him I felt like I was better than him, even if that educational advantage was a result of his sacrifice living in Mexico.

My father would call us cabrones, huevones, or even arrastrados which were all insulting variations for calling my brother and me lazy. Once again, because that Spanish was not acceptable at school and because my mother did not appreciate such language, I would feel embarrassed when I would go out with my dad. I wanted him to behave the way I thought a father should, and that meant to not scream, not say bad words, and to act seriously and not take everything as a joke. My mother did not scream, say bad words or joke, and I wanted my father to do the same. He refused to behave as my mother, especially with his humor.

It was not until I studied Mexican American Studies at the University of Texas Pan American I learned from Anzaldúa that Chicanas/os speak "a language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither español ni inglés but both. We speak a patois, a forked language, a variation of two languages," (Anzaldúa 2007, 77). This to me meant that colloquialisms and even curse words in English that had been transformed to sound like Spanish were all dynamics of living on the borderlands. However, as a child and especially as a young adolescent, these groserías, in addition to the Mexican male humor for which my father is famously known, irritated me because he represented a working class and a tone of vulgarity that I was trying to escape through my education. His language reminded me of the things I did not want to become therefore I focused more on school to think of myself as above those that did not have education and him in particular. I have since then analyzed why I continued to pursue education and realized that I was harming myself by thinking myself as better than anyone, but more so my father whom made things possible for me to have the ability to study more.

My father loves to enact his humor anywhere, but he enjoys doing it in public spaces or around strangers. One time while we were at home and his friends were over he was talking about a friend that they all had in common. The lady was embracing her natural curls but my father always made fun of her. He would say that she looked like her boiler had exploded on her face, "a esa vieja le explotó el boiler y no se fijó cuando salió." Every time I hear this I could not believe that he was talking about her. I was so embarrassed that he would be critiquing a woman for her hairstyle and more so that he was mocking her. I took most offense at the fact that he called her, a stranger, vieja and not a señora, both of which in English could be translated 'older woman,' though in Spanish vieja has a negative connotation.

It was not until graduated school and I read Jason de León's Land of Open Graves that I realized that my father's humoristic way of expressing himself likely helps him to cope with the anxieties of the border and specifically monetary issues. Another recurring joke in our house is always about money because my mother has never had a job in her life aside from being a beloved mother to my brothers and me. My father jokingly disapproves of her failure to generate income. My mother is now a U.S. resident, and ever since she became one, she has been saying that she will get a job. It has been over five years, and my father still asks her about this supposed job. When she complains about not having enough money, my father often replies, "pues si tuvieras buen cuerpo de perdido pudieras irte a bailar al téibol, pero con ese cuerpo de lavadora, ¿quién te paga, viejita?" My dad tells my mother that if she had a nice body she could go be a stripper, but with her washing-machine-type body, he doubts any one would pay. Although my father would never approve of my mother working, much less as a stripper, he jokes with her about using body and womanhood as a source of income. When I was younger, I hated that he would disrespect my mother because she would get mad and say, "ya vas a empezar a chingar."

As previously mentioned Jason De Leon's text speaks specifically about the way in which Mexican men use humor as a way to cope with tough times, just like my father: The joking that occurs on many occasions described in this book happens within, and is shaped by, not just 'Mexican working-class culture' but also the systems of federal immigration policy and capitalism. Migrant humor can highlight the tensions experienced during various parts of the crossing process, soften the blows of border enforcement and social marginalization in Mexico and the United States, and help people stay positive and focused. (2015, 92)

When I read that passage, I immediately thought about how my father would make a joke about anything. When I asked him why he makes jokes even at tough times, he told me that if he would take life so seriously that he would have already been screwed over, "ya me hubiera llevado la chingada." Although my father does not joke about immigration because he is still saddened that he cannot be in the U.S. with his family, his "working class culture" language serves as a way to make humorous critiques of capitalism and the need for every member in the family to make money in order to survive. Especially, this "humor" attacks my mom for having the privilege of working legally in the U.S. and getting paid in dollars but not doing anything about it. Therefore, his humoristic attacks on my mom are reflections of him not being able to provide enough.

For many of us, surviving in the U.S. means gaining a better education, and my father is aware of that, however, he is not aware of the demands that the university has for its students. When I began my undergraduate career in fall of 2010, I was on track to becoming a lawyer. My father had moved to the U.S. in 2003, as previously mentioned, and remained here until I was in graduate school. My father did not want me to struggle financially, as he had, and he knew that I did not like to be in the sun, without air-conditioning, or doing manual work. Therefore, he supported my education as long as he could control what I studied. Throughout my high school years, he had convinced me that becoming a lawyer would secure financial stability and could also help the family with immigration issues so that they could live in the U.S. legally; my mother attained her residency after I turned twenty-one years old in 2013 and could claim her.

Once I began college, I went into pre-law but found out that political science was not for me. I switched to study Spanish and Mexican American Studies, and he disapproved because he did not know why I needed Spanish when I had been studying it throughout elementary, middle, and high school. My father has never understood the demands of being at a university, and this separated us even further. I lived at home because he did not allow me to work, live outside the house, or take out college loans. This, however, complicated things; while I was busy trying to figure out how to navigate what is was like to be the first one in my family to attend a university, my father demanded that I take more responsibility with duties at home, such as cutting the grass.

Me being a young adult, the first one to go to a university from my dad's side of the family, and first generation U.S. citizen added many pressures to perform well. I was expected to perform the "model minority" and anything less would be a disappointment to the family, even when my other cousins had not gotten this far. He would tell me, "tanto que me esfuerzo para que no le echen ganas a la escuela." My father would guilt trip me by telling me that he would go above and beyond, and I basically repaid him by not trying. I also had to be available to answer questions for my little cousins who were asking about college. I did not even know how to even manage my own life, much less advise them about theirs. Most challengingly, I had to continue performing heteronormativity in public while behind closed doors being queer.

My father's presence while I attended college meant that I was highly monitored for I was now the same age as he was when he began working and got married. He created a sense of hypersurveillance at home that would affect the way in which I behaved outside our house. This affected me, specifically from 2003 to 2015, from the time that I was eleven-years-old to the time that I was twenty-three. I had to re-learn how to live in our home through every different phase of my life. This was alarming for I was not able to express myself as vulnerably as when my mother was the only one that took care of us.

In my teen years, I was frustrated by having to fulfill the expectations of performing life as a straight Mexican young man. However, being queer, Chicano, from the border, first-generation, and educated meant that different types of "masculinities are constructed in complex ways at the intersections of race, ethnicity, social class, and sexuality," (Hurtado and Sinha 2016, 13). These complex intersections are sometimes different from other masculinities in my home. My brother Erick for example whom is four years younger than I am, was the athlete, while I was the dancer. Therefore, the way in which my father spoke to Erick in comparison to me, did not measure. With Erick he would joke around more and especially made misogynistic jokes with him. When I was present, he knew that those behaviors would not be acceptable and I would try to correct his behavior, so he avoided the topic. My father's sexuality (heterosexuality) and his lack of knowledge about college led to expectations from me that resulted in conflicts between myself and my mother, and him. After every clash I felt attacked and questioned whether he approved of anything I did.

One of these was dealing with my aesthetic as an undergraduate. On the Texas/Mexico border, in 2010, there was a fashion trend where many men began to wear shirts and jeans with Swarovski crystals and sequins. I would see them from afar at the store but never wanted to ask my dad if he could purchase one for me. While I was an undergraduate, he still paid for my clothes. I also knew that my father disapproved of these because they were too flashy. However, when my father's younger friends began to wear them, he also liked them and this opened a window of opportunity for my queer expression to flourish via my wardrobe. It was not until my father, who was straight, wore these clothes that I could too. This informed me that I needed a straight man's approval to make something my own in order to not be othered or ridiculed.

When I was a graduate student at age twenty-three, I began to learn to live, love, and forgive my family and myself. As a graduate student I learned about the histories of sexuality, especially rooted in indigenous history through Maria Lugones, and I also began to learn about theories of healing through Native American scholars such as Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. These studies and the assignments I was required to do made me reflect on my positionality and how I embodied this. In Stephanie Álvarez's class I had a breakthrough moment of healing and it changed my attitude so much that my mother once told me, "you are not as angry as you used to be. Now you are more calm and don't fight us." This was because I understood my sexual identity not as an issue but as another layer. Unfortunately, in the midst of my healing my father had to leave the country through a forced self-deportation.

A Father Rises from Ashes

In 2015, after a series of misfortunes, my father was terrorized by local law enforcement in the Rio Grande Valley. He was driving and answered a phone call, which distracted him from the road and caused him to swerve and drive over the lines that marked a ramp to enter the highway. The police, after noticing that he did not speak English, interrogated him and found out that his visa had expired and that he had remained in the U.S. illegally. He was questioned about his job, his home, his history and even the vehicle he was driving. When they found out that my father worked in the local nightclub scene, they gave him two options: to cooperate or be deported. In 2013 in Falfurrias, Texas, a group made headlines as they found "630 lbs of cocaine sleved from tour bus of RGV-based Tejano Group Zinzzero," (Ortiz 2013). This opened up an investigation for many musical groups on the border. Since my father had admitted working with a music group, they told him he was to work undercover for them or that officers would raid the house to remove him from the country.

My father, terrified, did not leave the house. He stopped working and did not want to drive. It was like he was on house arrest. However, because the officers told him they would raid the house, he did not want to be at home either. He was immobilized in my aunt's house.

One night, I was studying and my mother called me to go to my aunt's house; it was an urgent matter. My father was crying when I entered. I had only seen him cry once before, when his father passed away. He stood in the living room of my aunt's house. It had been about a week since I saw him because he wanted to seclude himself and protect us from being in trouble with law enforcement. He hugged me and said he was leaving to Mexico, "Me voy a ir para México." I squeezed him and tried to hold back the tears. I knew that I had to be strong for him, for my brothers and my mother. However, I never told anyone that when I drove back to the house, I had to stop on the side of the road. My eyes were filled with tears, and my body filled with rage and helplessness. I hit the stirring wheel out of desperation and let out a cry. It was like I had just found out he had passed away. I saw my life deteriorate, as I was getting ready to apply to doctoral programs and felt like I could no longer continue that path. My family was going to be split again, only this time my father would not be able to visit us in Texas without crossing illegally. It seemed like our life had gone in a circle; the border once again split us. We had to learn to live apart anew. This time it would be different because I was working on my master's degree and teaching at the university with little vacation time.

The following year, in 2016, I moved across the country to begin a new life and my doctoral program. Now my family could only support me through long distance communication. I could not be with them, but I had my computer and my phone. My family was once again split: someone in Mexico, three people in Texas and another person in Michigan. However, I, like Anzaldúa, felt the need "to leave home so I could find myself, find my own intrinsic nature buried under the personality that had been imposed on me," (Anzaldúa 2007, 38). The time I would spend with my father would be even more limited and rushed because I would not be able to be in Mexico for the full duration of each of my vacations from school, but I have managed to make the most out of the trips that I do take to South Texas and Reynosa. I realized that my father had sacrificed so much for my mother, my siblings, and me, and it was now my time to do the same. Since leaving la frontera, I am the one who has had to reach out to him via message, phone calls, or video calls. I have cheered him up when he feels like he is not earning enough money to support our home in Texas because he is making several hundred pesos a day, which sometimes is less than fifty dollars. I constantly tell him that it is better to have a decent job than to be risking his life in the U.S. and risking the ability of seeing him as much as we do.

Since leaving home, I have had to be the tender one and show him love from afar. In early July of this year, 2018, for his birthday I sent him an extensive and emotional text that said how much I love him and how much I admire all he has done for us. This was the first year I could not be with him for his birthday because I was undergoing surgery and had to be in Michigan. All he could reply was, "gracias." I spoke to my mother to tell her that when I woke up in the morning and read that one-word text as a reply to a very heartfelt message, I was devastated. My father had told my mother that he had not expected that message from me and that he froze. He did not know how to reply because he did not know what to feel. bell hooks explains my father's inability to articulate his feelings as a function of his masculinity: "Given the gender stereotypes that assign to women the role of feelings and being emotional and to men the role of reason and non-emotion, 'real men' would shy away from any talk to love," (hooks 2000, 23).

The week after his birthday I had a major knee surgery in Michigan, and no one from my family could come up here to be with me: my mother is scared of flying, my brother has a full-time job, and my father is unable to enter the states. This affected my father in ways that I had never seen him affected for he knew that I was in pain, unable to walk, but also far away from loved ones. My father ever since my surgery has made sure to contact me through phone calls, text messages, or video calls to ask if I have eaten or how my recovery is going. Through this surgery I have seen a change in my father's communication with me and he makes time for me because he knows that he is physically absent. Unlike when I was a child, my father has even called me from his job to check in on me and tells me to cheer up.

During week two of my recovery I sent him a video that a friend took of me at a local grocery store. I was in an electric cart for handicapped people and my father replied, "No vayas a chocar, buey," meaning do not crash, dude. Then thirty minutes later he wrote, "tienes un corazón bien grande mijo. Échale ganas. Todo para delante," (You have a very big heart, son. Give it your best. Everything moving forward). My father's first reply was to make a joke and inserting his masculine tone by calling me dude, however I believe that after thinking about it he instead decided to give me, what I would call, the most heart felt message I had ever received from him. This change did not come easily and I did not expect it from him.

My father is capable of understanding the circumstances of being away from me and giving me the type of support that I needed to hear. It was through a constant push and pull on my part to open up to him that I felt he opened up to me, for as a queer son I have to learn to break the patter of silences that were passed down to my father.

Conclusion

Fathering is extremely difficult when you are a working class, Mexico-born, father whose family lives in Texas while you live in Tamaulipas, Mexico. Families like mine endure separations of mind, spirit, body, and heart. I understand fronterizo fathering as a man whose family is "ni de aqui, ni de alla," they are not from the U.S. nor are they from Mexico. Fronterizo fathering, to me, is an act of radical paternal love. This love penetrates the constraints of the border and also tries to cover la herida abiera, as Anzaldúa calls the border, in order to ensure that the children that live in the U.S. are never too distant from the motherland: Mexico. Based on my lived experiences, fronterizo fathering is a position of loving your family so much that you are willing to endure the pain of being separated to ensure a good future for them. Therefore, embarking on a road of sacrifice to fulfill your role as a father.

My family's separation through the border caused separations dealing with education, opportunities, class and identities. These created an emotional displacement rooted in geopolitical separation, generational differences and internalized expectations and ultimately created different lives for us. Many times, I feel limited about the things that my father and I can discuss because the things that surround me on a daily basis in academia are foreign to him. I cannot relate to his working life either. However, I have tried to understand that my fronterizo father continues to endure many lonely nights away from his family and unanswered prayers about being reunited. As I write this I reflect on the change in his communication with me by trying to adopt a language that shows affection when he cannot be physically present, as he had tried to do ever since I left home. This has been an arduous and slow task of him and myself for I found out that we needed to nurture and make up for the geographical and emotional separation.

Being a fronterizo father includes adapting, adjusting, and resisting all obstacles that try to split your family and navigating the complexities of your relationship to the best of your ability. For me, being a child of a fronterizo father means that I have to go beyond what is expected of me when it comes to communicating so that I can get some of the responses I need from my father. It has meant that I have had to embark, and continue to learn through, a journey of discovering love where I thought love did not exist between my father and me. It is having to seek the light that shines en el otro lado while I also consciously reflect on how I can nurture, heal, and love him and myself from este lado de la frontera. Through this article, I continue in that journey of amending the relationship that the border has splintered. Through these thoughts and writings, I aim to stitch esa herida abierda que ha sangrado but also realizing que ese ensagramiento es un sacrificio inspirado en amor.

Notes

i Although I studied the border and lived in it, it was not until I left it that I understood that the lifestyle of the southern border does not compare to the northern. I also understood that what we see as normal surveillance, for example border patrol vehicles and checkpoints, was unheard of near Canada.

ii I use privilege consciously and not in the context of the U.S. where privilege is often associated to wealth, status, and education. I use privilege to state that having a job or a business, such as my father in Mexico is more attainable than in the U.S. because he has access to things within his geographical constraints.

iii Maricón is a derogatory word commonly used in Mexico that is supposed to mock someone's sexuality. The English translation would be "faggot." However, there is something that my cousins would tell me specifically which was "Mari-con Bolas" which translates to Mary with testicles. This alludes to someone who behaves like a girl even if they had the genitalia of a boy.

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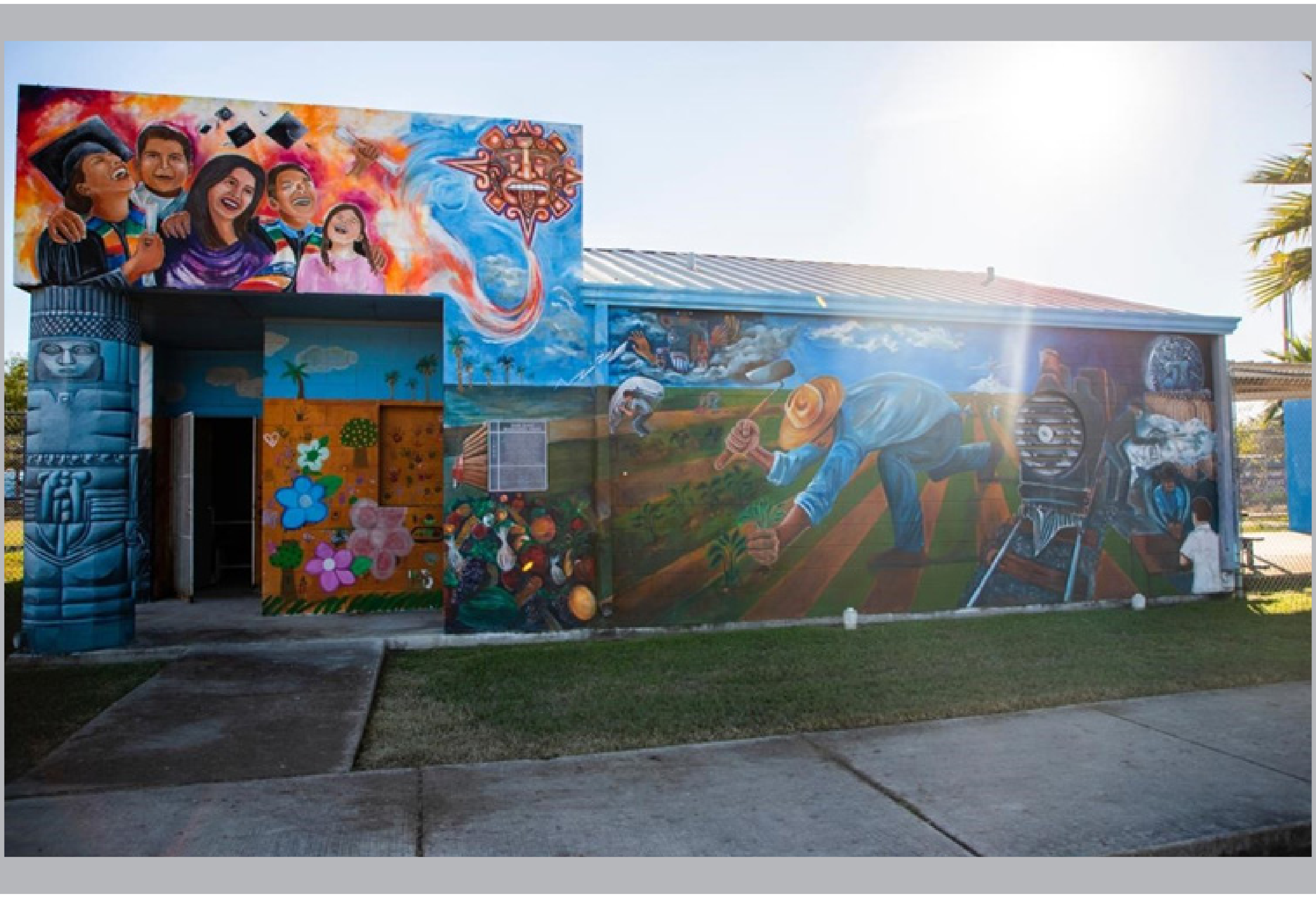

Photographed by Arnulfo Daniel Segovia

The New Atravesados: Tech Workers in the Digital Borderlands

Edyael Casaperalta

INTRODUCTION

During his presidential campaign, Donald Trump ran on a platform that blamed immigrants for taking jobs from American citizens. In his first month in office, the President pursued actions to limit the entry of aliens to study and work in the United States. Fulfilling his campaign promises, he began by obstructing the H-1B[4] visa program.

On April 18, 2017, President Trump released an executive order instructing governmental agencies to "suggest reforms" to create a system that awards H-1B visas to the "most-skilled or highest paid" applicants. The executive order did not directly halt the program or impose new regulations on the evaluation of H-1B applications. Nevertheless, its threat echoed in the title: "Buy American, Hire American."[5] The danger of a presidential directive to hire American lies in the intent to encourage a rhetoric and practice of nativism and xenophobia in the marketplace, sanctioned by government.

However, reliance on foreign labor is a foundational custom in the United States. The country initially built its infrastructure and wealth thanks to labor stolen from slaves brought here by force from other lands.[6] After slavery was outlawed, the United States began relying even more on labor provided by new groups of foreigners – migrants and immigrants.[7] Gloria Anzaldúa reminded us that foreign labor remained an important component of our nation's economy.[8] Today, American employers continue to pay lower wages, if any, for labor provided by newer immigrants.

A new element that makes reliance on foreign labor even more complex is the fact that the marketplace is now digital and not bound by physical borders. The age of digital technology and instant global communications encourages companies to seek customers and labor pools outside of their geographic boundaries. Because digital technology development has emerged as a new way to attain global market dominance and the United States is one of the countries leading the technology sector, foreign tech students and workers are attracted to its thriving tech culture. As a result, American tech companies rely on foreigners as a valuable labor source.

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[4] Exec. Order No. 10582, 20 C.F.R. § 654.12 (April 18, 2017). Available at https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-pressoffice/2017/04/18/presidential-executive-order-buy-american-and-hire-american

[5] Id.

[6] Howard Temperley, The Ideology of Antislavery in THE ABOLITION OF THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE: ORIGINS AND EFFECTS IN EUROPE, AFRICA AND THE AMERICAS, 26-29 (David Eltis and James Walvin eds., 1981).

[7] I make a distinction between the words migrant and immigrant. While these words are used interchangeably, I see an important difference between the two. Not every foreigner who migrates to another country intends to or ends up becoming an immigrant. The main distinction between these two words is temporal. An immigrant remains in a country for many years or the rest of their lives. Immigrants are seen as part of a country or actively choose to incorporate into the country's culture and society. On the other hand, a migrant's stay in a country is temporary. A migrant might live in a country for a few years, and might even have the intent to remain long-term, but ends up having a temporary stay. Migrants can also visit or live in a country from time to time, several times, but not permanently. This distinction is important for understanding the global marketplace and the borderlands. For example, many braceros and farmworkers began as temporary migrants and ended up becoming permanent immigrants in the United States.

[8] See generally, GLORIA ANZALDÚA, BODERLANDS/LA FRONTERA: THE NEW MESTIZA 31-35 (2nd ed. 1987).

This paper presents emerging analysis of technology work and temporary tech workers based on Gloria Anzaldua'sBorderlands/La Frontera. Here, the technology market is a digital borderland and tech students are "los atravesados,"temporaryforeignworkers.Here,digitaltechnologyexposesbordersasfictions;as"unnaturalboundaries" set up "to distinguish us from them." The paper peeks into the challenges that tech students as budding tech workers face in a marketplace that despite its borderless digital landscape retains the xenophobic attitudes of the analog market.

To begin learning about the challenge's temporary tech workers face, I set out to ask international students pursuing a telecommunications career how they navigate the contradictions of a political environment that is hostile to foreigners and a market environment that desires their labor. My thesis proposed that the combination of political hostility towards foreigners, the capitalist principle to maximize profits by lowering labor costs, and the hidden nature of technology work, push temporary technology workers towards forms of work that are unreported.

The small data sample I analyze in this paper was collected for a research project for a law school class. The project was intended to expose law students to empirical research, not to facilitate robust data collection. Because this paper emerged from a class project, I encourage readers to see the ideas expressed here as an initial exploration of the links between technology, legal theories of citizenship, immigration law, and Anzaldúan theory. My goal is to spark academic interest in the role migrants play in digital technology development and in the conceptualization of the technology market as another space that exposes political borders as fictions.

BACKGROUND

Historical Reliance on Foreign Labor & Guest Worker Programs

The United States has a long history of relying on foreign labor to build its infrastructure, workforce, and industry. For example, Chinese immigrants helped build the Transcontinental Railroad in the mid-1800s and contributed to the mining, farming, and service industries. The Bracero Program brought millions of guest agricultural workers to the United States from 1942-1964. Most recently, workers from Central America and India were recruited to clean up and rebuild the Gulf Coast after hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The United States benefits from foreign labor not only because it fulfills its demand for skilled workers, but because businesses get to pay less in wages and benefits (such as healthcare and Social Security contributions). If workers are not American citizens, they do not have the same avenues for redress from worksite abuse that citizens enjoy, and businesses are de facto exempt from full compliance with American labor laws.

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9 Id. at 25.
10 Id.
11 Gerald P. López, Don't We Like Them Illegal?, 45 U.C. DAVIS 1711, 1742-44 (2012).
12 Id. at 1745.
13 Id. at 1766; see also BRACERO HISTORY ARCHIVE, http://braceroarchive.org/ (last visited on May 11, 2017).
14 Ed Gordon, Hiring Illegal Immigrants for Katrina Reconstruction, NPR (June 2, 2006), http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5446965; Alice Speri, Indian Workers Awarded $14M in Post Hurricane Katrina Trafficking Case, VICE NEWS (Feb. 19, 2015), https://news.vice.com/article/indian-workersawarded-14m-in-post-hurricane-katrina-trafficking-case.
15 Temporary (Nonimmigrant) Workers, U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGR. SERVICES, https://www.uscis.gov/workingunited-states/temporary-nonimmigrant-workers (last visited Jan. 2, 2019).
16 Id.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services currently hosts 22 guest worker programs designed to allow temporary nonimmigrants to work in the United States. The programs address the need for employees in a variety of specialized fields. For example some programs are for athletes, doctors, nurses, or other people with "extraordinary ability." The H-1B Visa and the Optional Practical Training ("OPT") programs are available to international students in higher education, and are the main programs that allow international technology students to work in the United States.

The H-1B program "allows companies in the United States to temporarily employ foreign workers in occupations that require the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge and a bachelor's degree or higher in the specific specialty, or its equivalent."

While H-1B specialty occupations include science, engineering and information technology, other occupations are very specific such as fashion models, Free Trade Agreements workers from Chile and Singapore, and occupations related to department of defense.

The OPT Program is designed to allow international students who have been enrolled for nine months in an undergraduate or graduate program to seek employment opportunities within their field. The rationale is that employment offers them experience that compliments their education. Students eligible for OPT are allowed to work for a year from the grant of the permit, or up to three years if their studies are in the fields of science, technology, engineering, or math.

H-1B and OPT are different programs, and a student or an employer does not have to choose one over the other. However, students finishing their studies, typically apply to OPT first. The one-year or three-year OPT period allows them to obtain internships (which could be unpaid) or temporary work to gain experience and subsequently obtain full-time employment. OPT is available to students regardless of whether an employer hires them full-time or not. While an H-1B visa is attached to a specific employer who processes the application on behalf of the employee, OPT is attached to the student and allows the student to work for any employer she chooses. In addition, as long as all the elements of an OPT application are met, the student will be granted the permit to work. However, the H-1B visa has become an uncertain process. Only 85,000 H-1Bs are awarded each year, and the applicant pool exceeds the number of visas that are available. Thus, while an employer might submit an application on behalf of a desired employee, that employee might not obtain a visa.

"Tech Work" & the "Tech Worker"

The development of digital technologies and deployment of Internet service around the world have catapulted a global demand for experienced workers in Information Technology. Every single industry and aspect of human life has been altered by digital technology, from commerce to education to entertainment to health.

Jobs and careers in the Information Technology field evolve at the same fast pace that technology advances. Work in this sector encompasses a wide variety of jobs and career paths that may require specialized training or education. The constant and rapid change of information technology makes it difficult to define exactly what "technology work" means. In this paper, I loosely define "technology work" as labor that relies on specialized knowledge of computing technology and labor that helps this type of technology function. However, I exclude work that relies on computing technology but is not about computing technology. For example, a tax lawyer who telecommutes from home twice a week.

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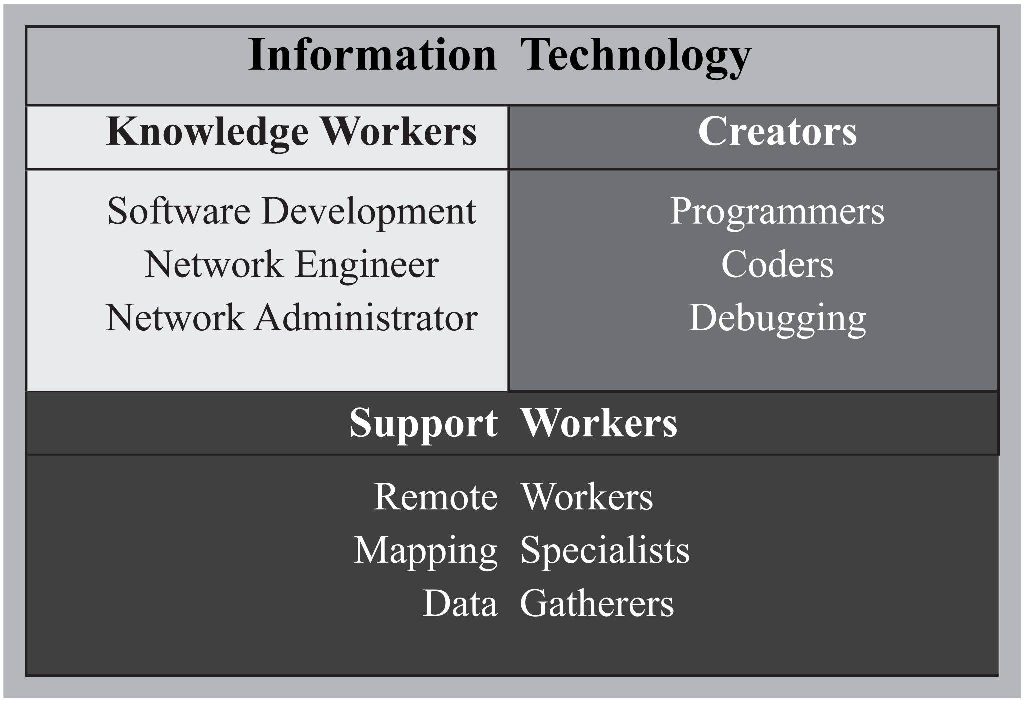
17 H-1B Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Cap Season, U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGR. SERVICES, https://www.uscis.gov/workingunited-states/temporary-workers/h-1b-specialty-occupations-and-fashion-models/h-1b-fiscal-year-fy-2019-capseason (last visited Jan. 2, 2019).

18 Id. H-1B3 Program.

19 Id. H-1B1 Program.

I purposely define technology work broadly in order to include the various types of work that technology workers perform. For example, I include individuals that work, by the hour, evaluating search engine results and the accuracy of map routes under the umbrella of "tech worker." Moreover, I argue that we must recognize these individuals as tech workers in order to have a full understanding of the labor ecosystem propelling the field of information technology, and to prevent that the erasure of their labor results in worker exploitation.

Conversations with professionals in different areas of technology work helped me understand the various jobs and paths that tech workers can pursue. Based on these conversations, I group technology workers in three categories: (1) Knowledge Workers, (2) Creators, and (3) Support Workers. Although the two top categories often intersect, the main distinction between these categories is the level of authority that a worker is allowed over the end-product or project. Knowledge workers have the most authority over the end-product while support workers have no say at all.



Information Technology

Knowledge Workers	Creators
Software Development	Programmers
Network Engineer	Coders
Network Administrator	Debugging

Support Workers

Remote Workers
Mapping Specialists
Data Gatherers

Knowledge Workers and Creators tend to be at the top of the field in recognition, authority over end-product, and pay. They have specialized knowledge and training – often an advanced degree – get to direct the development of a project, interact with clients, and are recognized as the creative force behind the evolution of information technology. Similar to knowledge workers, Creators have specialized knowledge and training that allows them to create the core software and computing components of a project. An important caveat is that these two types of worker overlap. Often a Creator is the Software Developer and gets to direct the

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20 Id. H-1B2 Program.

21 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(10).

22 Id.

23 Miriam Jordan, Visa Applications Pour In by Truckload Before Door Slams Shut, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 3, 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/03/us/tech-visa-applications-h1b.html (article chronicling the volume of applications for H-1B visas. In 2016, the applicant pool was capped at 230,000).

24 Trisha Thadani, Big tech firms pay H-1B workers more than prevailing wage, SAN FRANCISCO CHRON. (Apr. 10, 2017), http://www.sfchronicle.com/business/article/Big-tech-firms-pay-H-1B-workers-more-than-11061733.php?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter (this article chronicles the story of an employer and employee who submitted an H-1B visa application for an Argentinian employee, but could not keep her on staff because she did not win a visa).

25 For a few examples, see Chris Levin, 8 Kinds of IT Professionals: Which One Does Your Company Need?, LINKEDIN (Aug. 21, 2015), https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/8-kinds-professionals-which-one-does-your-company-chris.

project from beginning to end. Other times, the positions are separate, and the Knowledge Worker fulfills the role of a manager. According to the tech workers that I interviewed, it is really hard to find a good programmer; thus, a company would likely choose to lose its Knowledge Worker than its Creator.

The division of labor between the Knowledge Worker and the Creator will depend on the arrangement set up by the company. Both can have the authority to oversee the creation, test, and launch of a new application, and both might have the skills required to build the end-product. However; Creators, by definition, are the workers that always know how to build the end-product because their work is to create the computing software.

Support workers are at the bottom of the field in terms of recognition, authority over end-product, and pay. Support work is often short-term contract work and does not typically offer full-time employment. A tech support worker is hired by the hour, at minimum wage, and completes tedious data-related tasks. For example, evaluating the quality of search results when a user looks up a specific term on a web-browser, or monitoring the accuracy of driving directions for a traffic application. While support work requires some level of IT knowledge, it does not require advanced degrees or specialized tech training. One of the tech workers interviewed said that consumers do not realize it takes "invisible armies" of hourly-paid tech workers to run a single application like Facebook. Some in the IT industry call this type of labor "grunt work," and job-search platforms present this type of work as a way for individuals to try out the IT industry.

The Demand for Tech Workers in the United States

Tech workers are the modern iteration of foreign temporary workers in industrialized countries. The rapid advancement of digital technology has intensified global demand for experienced workers in this field. Once considered a field for antisocial geeks, tech is now a field of rockstars26 and brilliant risk-takers that drop out of college to become millionaires.

Amongst Americans, there is an increasing desire for lucrative tech careers and a cult-like following of brands and corporate leaders in the field. Programs designed to encourage youth and

Americans of all backgrounds to pursue education and careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math ("STEM") send a clear message about the desirability of tech work and tech workers. For some, tech work is a necessary economic transition in a country that eroded its manufacturing plants and industries.

While there are endless articles and studies bemoaning the lack of racial diversity in the tech industry, these articles focus on the dearth of non-White American citizens. In fact, one characteristic unique to the industry is the substantive presence of foreigners racialized as people of color in the United States. Some accounts report that one-third of Silicon Valley, the mecca of the tech industry, is foreign-born. This figure is not surprising in an industry founded on the principle of global connectivity. The industry's inherent global reach reflects a global

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26 Interview with the director of an IT department at a university (Apr. 24, 2017); interview with a professor of Intellectual Property law and former programmer (Apr. 27, 2017), and interview with a college graduate working on hourly-basis contracts for two global tech companies (Apr. 2017). The author offered anonymity to interviewees in order to encourage candor in their conversation. The interviews were not recorded, and notes are on file with the author.

27 Shane Schick, Expose routine support for the IT grunt work it is, IT CANADA (Nov. 29, 2017), http://www.itworldcanada.com/blog/expose-routine-support-for-the-it-grunt-work-it-is/59103. 25 Allan Hoffman, Break into IT with Temporary Work, MONSTER https://www.monster.com/careeradvice/article/break-into-it-with-temporary-work (last visited May 11, 2017). 26 Intel Rockstar TV Commercial - Sponsors of Tomorrow, YOUTUBE (June 1, 2011), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqSWWbYhyU0.

28 See, e.g., GIRLS WHO CODE, https://girlswhocode.com/ (last visited Jan. 2, 2019); SELF-ESTEM!, https://selfestem.org/ (last visited Jan. 2, 2019).

29 Clive Thompson, The Next Big Blue-Collar Job is Coding, WIRED (Feb. 8, 2017), https://www.wired.com/2017/02/programming-is-the-new-blue-collar-job/.

workforce and leadership. In addition, tech work can be performed at distance. Tech workers do not have to be in a specific physical location to perform their work. As long as a tech worker has internet connection, she is at the office.

However; current anti-immigrant, nativist, political rhetoric hostile to foreigners coupled with the inherent mobility of IT work paint a bleak picture for the prospects of foreign, temporary tech workers in the United States. While this rhetoric is not unique to the tech field nor unique in the history of the nation's treatment of foreign guest workers, I ask:

> *How are international students as aspiring tech workers navigating a political climate hostile to foreigners?*

I. Thesis

This paper conceptualizes the technology market as the digital iteration of the borderlands and international tech students as migrant workers. The paper peeks into the challenges that foreign tech workers face in the digital marketplace of the United States. To begin learning about the challenge's foreign tech workers face, I asked international students enrolled in an interdisciplinary telecommunications graduate program how they navigate the contradictions of a political environment that is hostile to foreigners and a market environment that desires their labor.

My thesis proposed that the combination of political hostility towards foreigners, the capitalist principle to maximize profits by lowering labor costs, and the hidden nature of technology work, push temporary technology workers towards forms of work that are unreported.

II. Methods

My approach to learn about how tech workers navigate a political climate hostile to foreigners incorporated various strategies. I used both quantitative and qualitative methods involving international students enrolled in a telecommunications graduate program at an American university.

I conducted interviews with three tech workers in different areas of the field, organized a focus group with international students, and distributed an anonymous survey asking international students about their perceived employment prospects in the tech industry. Each data collection strategy catalyzed the next. I interviewed tech workers to gain clarity about concepts that I learned from the focus group, and I distributed the survey because very few participants signed up for the focus group.

Participant Group & Researcher's Position Within that Group

I recruited international students from the Interdisciplinary Telecom Program ("ITP") at the University of Colorado in Boulder as the main participants for my project. ITP offers certificates and degrees in an interdisciplinary environment that combines "technology, policy, and business." Students can choose a network engineering, network security, telecom policy and strategy, wireless networking, or "open option" track.

As a law student and United States citizen, I was an outsider to this group. However, as a telecommunications law student, I have taken classes and participated in cross-disciplinary academic events where I met students enrolled in ITP. In addition, my experience as an immigrant

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30 Bonnie Marcus, The Lack of Diversity in Tech is a Cultural Issue, FORBES (Aug. 12, 2015), https://www.forbes.com/sites/bonniemarcus/2015/08/12/the-lack-of-diversity-in-tech-is-a-culturalissue/#45e9c16279a2; Vauhini Vara, Why Doesn't Silicon Valley Hire Black Coders?, BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK (Jan. 21, 2016), https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2016-howard-university-coders/.

31 Rachel Massaro, 2016 Silicon Valley Index, JOINTVENTURE http://www.jointventure.org/images/stories/pdf/index2016.pdf (last visited May 11, 2017).

32 Id.

inspired my interest in learning about the experiences of international students and provided a point of connection with potential participants. I hoped the interactions I previously had with international ITP students and my background as an immigrant would encourage them to participate.

A. Participant Outreach

First, I invited students to participate via email. Administrators at the ITP department helped me reach potential participants by sharing a recruitment email with international students in the program. I hoped to recruit at least 12 participants for two focus groups, six participants per group. Each focus group was scheduled to take three hours. However, the busy school and work schedule of ITP students makes it difficult to recruit them to participate in extra-curricular activities.

The sensitive topic of the focus group – career prospects of international students in a climate hostile to foreigners – presented a challenge to recruitment and candid participation. The subject of someone's future is exciting to discuss when it looks promising, but my interest in the professional future of international students was precisely to learn about how they were navigating political hostility that makes their future uncertain. I knew the conversation I sought was personal, challenging, and implicated confronting short and long-term decisions and obstacles in their careers. I relied on the rapport I had developed with students and hoped some would be interested in a safe and trusting environment where they could share their experiences. To incentivize participation, I offered a home-cooked meal and anonymity. In the end, I was able to recruit four students to participate in the focus group; thus, I hosted only one in-person conversation. The focus group consisted of two parts: a written survey and a guided conversation based on the questions in the survey. To maintain the anonymity of students and encourage frank dialogue, I did not audio-record the conversation. I relied on the answers the students provided in the written survey and took hand-written notes during our exchange to capture data accurately. After our conversation, participants confirmed that students would likely not take time to join a focus group, but suggested I create an online survey tool that students could answer at their own time, anonymously. Thus, I adapted the survey I used in the focus group and put it on an online platform.

Second, to compliment the insights I heard in the focus group, I distributed a survey to potential participants. I used the platform Survey Monkey to be able to control the anonymity of participants. Other platforms such as Google Forms rely on the email address of respondents and collect their IP address. Although the survey did not request information that would identify a respondent, it did request sensitive information and I wanted to ensure that a participant's identity could not be collected from meta data. Administrators at the ITP department again helped me reach potential participants by sharing the link to the anonymous survey with international students in the program. Unfortunately, only eight students took the survey and only two completed it fully. This resulted in a total of 12 responses from a focus group and the anonymous survey.

Although the outreach yielded little data, discussion from the focus group and surveys offered valuable insights for exploring the challenges international students and tech workers face in the hostile political climate fostered by the Trump administration.

Finally, to learn more about the vast world of Information Technology work and its workers, I interviewed three workers from different areas of the field. I interviewed the director of an Information Technology department at a university; a former programmer and professor of Technology and Intellectual Property Law; and a temporary worker for both Uber and Google. Each interviewee pursued a different education route and occupied a different sector of tech work, but all had the ability to work permanently in the United States. These

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33 Interdisciplinary Telecom Program, U. OF COLO. BOULDER, http://www.colorado.edu/itp/ (last visited Jan. 2, 2019).

34 Id.

35 Recruitment email, focus group questions, and survey in file with author.

interviews helped me learn about the employment prospects for foreign tech workers. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to an hour, and I only took hand-written notes. I did not prepare specific questions to ask each interviewer but approached each conversation with general curiosity about their experience in the technology sector.

III. Findings

> *"Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them."*
> ***– Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera***

While I was not able to collect the responses I had hoped, conversation from the focus group and data collected from the survey provided valuable insights. Overall, the small data sample showed that a trend encouraging temporary tech workers to pursue unreported work does not exist. Instead, a more complex reality emerged. Although international tech students face barriers stemming from their non-immigrant status, they also enjoy advantages that maintain employment prospects open even when the political climate is hostile to foreigners. These advantages are: advanced degrees, social status and upward mobility in their home country, and specialized knowledge that will be valued in other countries.

Despite these advantages, the responsibilities that participants face in their home countries, such as loans borrowed to finance their American education, press students to stay as long as the OTP program allows them to work.

Tech Work is for Americans

When searching for jobs and during internships, participants received the message that certain tech work is for Americans only. A participant recounted an experience of being singled out at a high-security lab that requires military clearance. In order to work inside the lab, it was required that a U.S. citizen accompany her and a red light-bulb outside the lab door remained on. The red light indicated to others that a non-citizen was inside the lab.

Participants also said that some of the course tracks and internships that were offered at the program were only attainable by U.S. citizens because they required security clearance that international students would not be able to obtain.

A. Contract Work

> *"Upside: well, if you are totally unemployed then working on contract is better then not working. Downside: No job security, hence can not plan future while working on contracts."* ***– Focus group participant***

International students often face pressure to meet the financial responsibilities and debt they acquired in their home country to pursue an American education. Thus, even if the desired H1-B visa is out of grasp, temporary contract work offers a way to try to recoup the money invested. During the focus group conversation, students expressed that contract work – temporary, hourly-paid, with no benefits – was not what they hoped to obtain by moving to the United States but might be the only option available to them.

The rules of the OPT program require students that stay to find a job in their field of study. OPT allows international students to take temporary internships and jobs, even if unpaid, while they look for a permanent position or a job that can lead to an H-1B visa. Students in STEM fields are allowed to intern or work for up to three years after completion of their program without having to find an employer that will sponsor their H-1B visa application. Thus, the students that participated in this project would be able to use their allotted OPT time to work in a temporary tech position.

An aura of wariness emerged when discussing the topic of contract work. Participants alluded to the ability of big tech companies to hire high-skilled tech workers, inexpensively, without having to disclose that they hire foreign workers. This process is done through a third-party recruiting agency that hires the tech worker as an hourly-paid laborer. In this imbalanced labor scenario, the high-trained tech worker completes work the company needs but gets none of the financial, career, or immigration benefits that their work would otherwise afford them. The company, on the other hand gets the tech work they need and does not have to pay the tech worker on par with what the market would award them. Via this process, a company gets to hire temporary, high-skilled, disposable tech workers.

Participants reflected on the experiences of colleagues they have seen take temporary work. One participant mentioned a friend who has been working on contract for a big tech company for about a year without the prospect of a permanent job offer. The participant said their friend works in meaningful projects, but only completing certain tasks and without authority to direct the project or opportunities to advance in their career. This less-known route of tech work leverages the temporary status of foreign students to the benefit of American tech companies.

To be clear, contract tech work is not reserved for non-citizens only. U.S. citizens are also hired as temporary workers. However, contract or temporary work places the high-skilled but foreign tech worker on par with the support-worker who is an American citizen. Unfortunately, the limited data gathered did not reveal more about the differences between these two types of temporary workers. Further research would help explain the nuances of contract and temporary work in the IT industry from the workers' perspective. A more expansive research project could clarify and compare the different experiences U.S. citizens and foreign students face as temporary tech workers in the United States.

The Danger of Policies Hostile to Foreign Workers

Policy rooted in a xenophobic, nativist, closed-border rhetoric that demonizes foreigners is in direct opposition to the global, borderless reach of information technology. Even conservative think-thanks account that "America's information technology companies are starved for high-skilled workers." Alienating and threatening the foreign workers that perform the tech work Americans cannot currently fulfil is likely to hurt the country's position as a global tech leader. The danger of policies hostile to foreign tech workers is the decline of our own tech industry and economy.

The international students that participated in this project hoped to contribute their talents to this country. If American policy blocks their ability to do so, they will find other countries that welcome them. Below are responses from participants to the question:

"What do you think politicians in the United States should do about immigrants?"

- "They need to understand that not all the immigrants are here to settle down. Most of us are here because the opportunities are in abundance. Reducing [opportunities] means lesser number of skilled workers in the United States."
- "They should be a bit more flexible about the visa status because not only do we need to be in this country, they need us as well."
- "Make robust policies that offer employment (hence strengthening the U.S. economy) while also offering them benefits and security."
- "I am [here] to advance in my career. With the current administration, the most realistic option is to go back to my home country after a few years and search for telecom jobs there based on

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36 This is not meant to insinuate that companies hire temporary workers off the books, but to point out that in this political climate where companies are being asked to hire Americans first, it could be detrimental to the image of a company for the public (or the administration) to know that they hire foreign workers.

37 Daniel Griswold, Let High-Tech Workers In!, CATO INST., https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/lethightech-workers (last visited Jan. 2, 2019).

my degree and work experience in the United States."

- "Be more welcoming and considerate, not enforce unreasonable inhumane laws."
- "Literally, 90%+ students of ITP are immigrants. Americans are really not interested/motivated/do not care about this stream of studies. Who do they think are going to fill in these jobs? We are spending lot of money to receive the best education on this planet so I think it will be better if we get employed here rather than forced to leave this country."

Even though the American technology market wants foreign tech workers, the Trump administration's immigration policies make it difficult for bright, foreign tech students to stay. The hostile political climate pushes budding tech workers trained by American institutions to consider other countries that are welcoming and would appreciate their talents.

The Advantage of Advanced Degrees and Social Status

Facing structural rejection, whether experienced as security measures that prevent non-citizens from pursuing certain career paths or from employers unwilling to even consider interviewing international students during career fairs, participants expressed interest in other countries to launch their career. One survey respondent stated:

> *"I have worked for 3 years in Japan and the attitude of officials there was welcoming. Everyone wanted us to work there, work for that country. However, mostly everyone in the U.S. wants us out. I really do not understand what exactly is the problem with those people."*

A significant difference between temporary tech workers and other guest workers is that tech workers can access professional opportunities outside of the United States. By the end of their stay in the U.S., international tech students attain a highly sought-after degree that opens job opportunities in their home country. A student remarked:

> *"Why would I want to be a second-class citizen? My parents work for the government back home, they are respected."*

While participants migrated to the United States with dreams of leaving their mark in the tech world, the hostility they experience here is a barrier to their stay. Enduring political hostility might be even illogical when other countries offer a welcoming environment and, as a result, a promising future.

Recommendations for Administrators

During the focus group conversation, participants expressed feeling uninformed by administrators about the restrictions their non-citizen status imposes to pursue certain internships and career paths. In addition, they thought that program administrators could do more to educate employers about the ability to hire international students under the OPT program without having to sponsor their H1-B application. While the following recommendations from participants are intended for administrators of the ITP program, they are applicable to all technology and telecommunications graduate programs recruiting international students:

- "They can help mediate with the hiring organizations on the rules and regulations on student in the F1 program. Additionally, they can also encourage organizations to hire international students."
- "Professors and alumni can serve as the conduit for finding jobs, by talking to the respective organizations and help them understand the need to hire international students. Professors can also offer additional avenues for continuing in the student visa program by providing us with funding for higher education."

- "[Be] open [i.e., truthful] about the kind of jobs available when we join the program."
- "Be well versed with our rhetoric. maybe organize sessions with tech companies where they highlight the benefits of hiring international students."
- "Keep us updated with experiences, help us network, give us a true honest look at what / how the workplace environment can affect us."
- "[Be] more transparent about possible issues, showing assurance support with changes in rules, having conversations and understanding rules completely to make us better informed."
- "At best they need to stand up with us against the government in making good reforms."

I. A Tech Marketplace Sin Fronteras

> *"A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants." –* ***Gloria Anzaldúa***

The data sample collected to inform this paper is too small to be statistically significant or conclusive. Thus, I encourage readers to see the ideas expressed in this section as an initial exploration of the links between technology, legal theories of citizenship, immigration law and policy, and Anzaldúan theory. My goal is to spark academic interest in the role migrants play in digital technology development and in the conceptualization of the technology market as a tool for exposing political borders as fictions.

The Tech Marketplace is Global

Information Technology creates a new digital marketplace, without borders. Further, because the digital market does not depend on physical locations to obtain labor or consumers, borders are exposed as fictions. However, the digital world remains a reflection of the analog world. As such, the borders we draw around ourselves in the analog world, accompany us into the modern digital world.

Technology work does not require a worker to be physically present at an office, manufacturing plant, or country. Similarly, consumers do not have to be physically present at a shop, restaurant, or class in order to use digital services. The almost ubiquitous presence of technology in our everyday lives and the billions of people across the world that use technology to connect with each other create a demand for a global workforce. Policies that corral work and workers around a nation-state might lose ground in a global marketplace. Success in this modern digital marketplace involves fostering a global, borderless mentality.

The Contingent Tech Workforce

A contingent workforce is made up of workers who consider their work temporary. This workforce includes

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38 Karen Kosanovich, A Look at Contingent Workers, U.S. DEPT. OF LABOR, https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2018/contingent-workers/home.htm (last visited Jan. 3, 2019).

39 See Lizzie Widdicombe, The Programmer's Price, THE NEW YORKER (Nov. 24, 2014), http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/11/24/programmers-price (article about an that markets "rockstar" programmers).

40 Allan Hoffman, Break into IT with Temporary Work, MONSTER https://www.monster.com/careeradvice/article/break-into-it-with-temporary-work (last visited May 11, 2017) (describing the benefits of temporary work to break into the tech world); also Sarah Kessler, A Look at the Temp Agencies of the Future, FAST COMPANY (Oct. 16, 2015), https://www.fastcompany.com/3052030/a-look-at-the-temp-agencies-of-the-future. 40 Kosanovich, supra note 37.

independent contractors, part-time, temporary, seasonal, and leased workers not on a company's payroll because they are not full-time employees. Organizations can hire a contingent worker directly or from a staffing agency. Contingent workers are usually added on an ad-hoc basis to a company's workforce, and work either onsite or remotely.

This type of work arrangement has become popular in the tech industry, in part because it provides flexibility and independence for both employers and employees. However, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, contingent workers generally receive fewer if any benefits, less pay than full-time workers, and are less likely to be protected by labor laws.

Because tech workers can work remotely, they can remain invisible. This lack of visibility presents benefits and dangers to the tech worker. For example, one benefit is that remote and “hidden” work attracts queer and gender-nonconforming individuals that have historically been excluded from visible workspaces.

On the other hand, invisibility can also make tech workers vulnerable to exploitation. Where work is kept from the public eye, public protections may not reach. The potential for exploiting tech workers increases when they are contingent because they do not enjoy the same employment regulations that protect permanent employees.

Although the three classes of tech workers outlined in Section 1.B can all engage in temporary work, I believe support workers face the most risk for exploitation in this field. Support workers have less bargaining power as hourly-paid workers, completing tedious tasks that others don’t want to do, and often working out of sight. To minimize the risk of exploitation, the IT field must recognize support workers as tech workers. The information technology field should (1) make the work and the worker visible, thereby bringing to light any potential exploitative practices, and (2) develop a full understanding of the ecosystem of workers it takes to propel the field.

Temporary Tech Workers as the New Atravesados

> *“Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal.’”* ***– Gloria Anzaldúa***
>
> *“Most crucial to the agricultural growers was the need for a reserve labor pool of workers who could be imported for their work, displaced when not needed, and kept in subordinate status so they could not afford to organize collectively or protest their conditions.”[41]* ***– Michael Olivas***

In Borderlands/La Frontera, Anzaldúa presents the concept of “los atravesados,” those who “go through the confines of the ‘normal.’” Los atravesados are trespassers. They enter territories delineated by man-made borders. Their crossing defies political power and control, exposing a border as the fiction it is. Anzaldúa points out that those in control of territories describe themselves as the “legitimate inhabitants;” citizens by law, birth, or divine right. In these controlled territories, the borderlands, “tension grips the inhabitants” and those in power threaten the trespassers.

Temporary foreign tech workers are los atravesados of the digital borderlands. While there is a mechanism for temporary tech workers to obtain a visa that could eventually allow them to become permanent residents and citizens, the Trump Administration has threatened that mechanism. Trumpian immigration policy and rhetoric has reminded the country that immigrants, refugees, and any atravesados that are not full-status citizens are under heavy legal scrutiny. The Hire American Executive Order and scrutiny of the H1-B visa program are the legal threats the "legitimate inhabitants" wield.45

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[41] Michael A. Olivas, The Chronicles, My Grandfather’s Stories, and Immigration Law: The Slave Traders Chronicle as Racial History, 34 ST. LOUIS U. L. J. 425, 436 (1990).

[42] Anzaldúa, supra note 5, at 25.

[43] Id.

[44] Id.

[45] Id.

CONCLUSION

> *To survive the Borderlands*
> *you must live sin fronteras*
> *be a crossroads.*
> ***– Gloria Anzaldúa***

Even beyond tech work, the labor and markets have been fluid throughout history. All humans have migration in common. Workers, documented or undocumented, temporary or permanent, constantly move beyond borders. In this regard, workers are the permanent atravesados of the world. Where there is a demand for labor, there is a migrant ready.

Our nation-state based definition of citizenship is in direct contradiction to the realities of labor, migration, and the global market. Proposals for universal citizenship are often dismissed, but they challenge our antiquated notions of citizenship. They challenge us to abandon the fiction of the nation-state and embrace a global policy based on workers. Universal citizenship proposals invite us to see the atravesados everywhere and to build a new consciousness on the experience of existing everywhere, inspite of borders.

The digital world is literally a physical endeavor created by human hands. It is not a naturally occurring space. That fact alone gives me hope for a new consciousness around migration. I hope that the physical exercise of creating a digital world help us recognize the man-made origin of all borders around us. I hope that becoming aware of our border-creation will awaken the new mestiza consciousness that Anzaldúa augured in *Borderlands/La Frontera.*

Decolonizing Migration Studies: A Chicanx Studies Perspective and Critique of Colonial Sociological Origins

Christian Ramirez

ABSTRACT

Sociological research on international migration shares a fundamental question: What underlining forces drive migration? Sociologists use a number of theories such as neoclassical economics, new economics of migration, network theory, segmented labor market theory, and world systems theory among others to untangle the complexities of individual and group migration patterns. These theoretical propositions, and the methodological applications that are informed by them, are colonial in their epistemic origins and assumptions. Explored in this paper are the assumptions, limitations, and the epistemic privileging within westernized migration studies and sociology. Chicanx Studies systematically addresses this question by confronting colonization's impact on how we contemporarily study, measure, and analyze human behavior including migration. Moreover, the discipline works to humanize Chicanx populations and their historic migratory life ways. For borderland theorist Gloria Anzaldúa the underling force that drives Chicanx and Mexican migration is their ontological and epistemological connection to their indigenous tradition of "long walks" across recent politicized borders. Her work contributes to migration studies' lack of epistemic diversity and also gives insight to the historical relationship Chicanxs have with migratory practices to other parts of the U.S. beyond the Southwest.

KEY TERMS: *Chicanx Migration, Borderlands, Decoloniality, Colonialism*

Introduction

There is little debate concerning the societal impact colonization had and continues to have in the Americas. Beginning in the late 15th century, European colonization imposed new geopolitical identities, racial and cultural hierarchies, and attempted to suppress Indigenous cosmologies and ontologies. For Mexico, this process was well underway after the political conquest of Tenochtitlan in 1521. Perhaps one of the most violent acts of colonialism is what Sociologist Ramon Grosfoguel (2013) calls "epistemicide," or the extermination of knowledge and ways of knowing. As social scientists, we have to seriously consider the colonial history of scientific inquiry and its relationship with modernity. This paper recognizes and addresses western colonial epistemological projects in the Americas and their relationship to knowledge production. It gives particular attention to how the relationship between modernity and knowledge production affect our understanding of Mexican and Chicanx migratory life ways within the context of migration studies.

Mexican migration to the US Southwest does not begin in 1848, as commonly estimated in migration narratives. The origins of contemporary Mexican migration extend to pre-colonial routes carved out by multi-cultural Indigenous peoples. Resisting the conceptualization of Mexican migration as a recent nation-state phenomenon is in itself an intentional act to decolonize migration studies. From this perspective, unauthorized migration from Mexico into the U.S. can be understood as acts of resistance, as rebels, as Shadow-Beast.

Sociological and migration studies do not prioritize pre-colonial migratory practices by people of Mexican descent. Instead, theories such as neoclassical economics, new economics of migrations, network theory, segmented labor market theory, and world-systems theory among others are given preference to engage the complexities of individual and group migration patterns. These theoretical frameworks, and the methodological applications that are informed by them, are colonial in their epistemic origins. I argue that this segmented group of theories and perspectives limits our understanding of the intentionality behind Chicanx migratory lifeways. In addition, they fall into a nation-state temporal trap in which migration is seen as a recent phenomenon. How does our analysis shift when we unfold the historical and cultural conditions under which sociological theories of migration were produced? How do these conditions inform our theoretical understanding of migration for a group of people Indigenous to the Americas? Finally, where do Chicanx epistemologies fit within this analytical shift?

Chicanx Studies provides some guiding thoughts to consider as the discipline takes up these questions if taken from a decolonial approach. While the intellectual genealogy of Chicanx Studies is broad, one of its common political objectives is to systematically address colonialism's impact on how we study, measure, analyze, and represent Chicanx social life, particularly in matters of migration. Moreover, Chicanx Studies works to (re)humanize colonial subjectivities caught in the "flows" of migration. It also shifts away from elitist epistemologies so that other "knowers" are acknowledged as experts in migration. This paper engages borderland theorist Gloria Anzaldúa's (1983) idea of "long walks" as migratory practices for Chicanxs and Mexican descendants before the creation of nation-state borders. For Anzaldúa, the underling force that drives Chicanx and Mexican migration is their ontological and epistemological connection to their indigenous traditions.

I first begin by outlining the origins of sociology and its relationship to western modernity and imperial expansion. Secondly, I provide a snapshot of the most widely accepted colonial frameworks used in migration studies literature. I then introduce the key characteristics of the coloniality/modernity framework as they relate to Chicanx migration and challenge colonial frameworks. I conclude with a call for Chicanx epistemologies as both appropriate and necessary towards conceptualizing Mexican and Chicanx migration in the borderlands and a step towards decolonizing migration studies.

What's Empire got to do with it?

The relationship between imperial expansion and western modernity as historical processes needs to be explored as we think about the origins of sociology and its role in interpreting human group behavior and more specifically migration. Bhambra (2011) posits that the sociological understanding of modernity typically rests on ideas of the modern world emerging out of the processes of economic and political revolution located in Europe and underpinned in the cultural changes brought about by the Renaissance, Reformation, and Scientific Revolution. As Walter Mignolo (2005) asserts, the history of capitalism and "the history of Western epistemology, as it has been constructed since the European Renaissance, run parallel to and complement each other" (p. 227). It is this complementary relationship that contributes to the epistemic privileging of migration theories that dominate the way scholars have engaged the historical and contemporary movement of Chicanxs in the U.S.

For example, classical sociology, as Stephen Seidman (2011) argues, emerged in the context of imperial states aspiring to world empires. From this historical position, modernity serves as the structuring mode of knowledge as it is the leading framework for migration studies. Overlapping with this argument is the view that knowledge produced in Europe and the United States is authoritative in nature and "universal" in application to all human phenomenon worldwide. This colonial logic was applied and further developed in the Americas as its geography and people, Indigenous and African, became the first identities of Modernity (Quijano, 2008). Emphasized here is the need not only for the expansion and exploitation of land but an epistemological subjugation of the peoples from that conquered space. The tools, logics, and philosophical views long held by migrant communities were no longer driven by priest, cross, and bible. Instead instrumental rationality became the replacing order of knowledge and knowledge production. European colonial expansion made these processes and intellectual projects possible.

Seidman (2011) found that thinkers such as Marx, Durkheim, and Weber did not incorporate the dynamic of empire into their historical sociology. This exclusion is quite unfortunate and a missed opportunity as empire building was at the center of the making and organizing of modernity, a concept central to the discipline of sociology. The materialist philosophy of Marx makes an insufficient effort to include the discplacment of Indigenous peoples across the Americas or the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in relation to the development of industrialized societies and capitalism. In ignoring the historical significance of empire, displacement, and enslvament, what is left is a considerably porous understanding of human relationships between colonized and colonizer. The implications of dismissing the historical role of western "universal" frameworks have negative consequences for both Mexican and Chicanx communities in the United States.

As a reminder, colonization was based on perceived ethnic and epistemic superiority. Not only were Indigenous bodies subject to colonial forces but also subjectivities. Internalizing the European cultural imaginary via violent colonial assimilation practices was a critical component of colonial projects across the Americas. Castro-Gómez (2008) points out that the Europan cultural imaginary perpetuated the idea that the only way of relating to nature, the social world, and our own subjectivities is through a narrow, Europeanized lens. Colonial logics presuppose the idea that racialized subjectivities could not think for themselves, let alone create knowledge. European philosophers who claim to have ownership over the creation of sociology made little to no effort to engage the minds and world views of those most adversely affected by colonial legacies in their development of the social science aimed to explain social human relationships. The epistemic exclusion of Indigenous knowledge in migration studies further neglects the idea that Chicanx and Mexican migrant communities are foreign in the land space of their historic migratory routes.

Indigenous migratory patterns established prior to and during the onset of Spanish empire building have yet to be fully engaged by classically trained sociologist. The employment of a deeper historical analysis of Mexican migration not only strengthens the field of migration studies but also works to humanize the diverse mestizo and Indigenous communities that make up the Chicanx population in the U.S. Additionally, recognizing migratory life ways from the persepcetive of Chicanx and Indigenous scholars is necessary towards breaking away from a nation state centered temporal trap as commonly seen in colonial sociological theories of migration.

The Temporal Trap of Migration Theories

Efforts towards decolonizing migration studies must take into account the histories that supersede the establishment of the nation state. For many sociologists (Portes & Rubaut, 2014; Massey, et. al 1994; Brettel & Hollofield 2013) the study of migration begins at the inception of the nation state. This historical 'jumping off point', or what I call the temporal trap of migration theories dominates the temporal location within migration studies. So long as this historical moment takes priority, the antecedents to more ancient migrations remain buried under the thick coat of modernity. Only after the world's territory became organized into states with internationally recognized boundaries did the distinction between internal and international migration emerge (Kritz, 2007). This temporal trap severs generations of cross-cultural exchange among the various Indigenous peoples moving across what we now call the US–Mexico borderlands.

The following scholars in this section subscribe to this nation state centered temporal trap and reproduce a what Grosfoguel (2014) identifies as a "northern-centric" social science view of the world. The intention here is to demonstrate how the temporal trap has been central to the most widely accepted social scientific theories of migration by colonialist thinkers. Migration theories fall under four general categories: Sociological, Economic, Geographical, and Unifying (See Figure 1, pg. 25). Each category is responsible for measuring the cause, content, and consequences of immigration. Regardless of their disciplinary home, however, the larger structuring frame for these theories are embedded in European modernity.

Sociologist Stephen Castles (2014), in his chapter titled "Theories of Migration," concludes with a synthesis of arguments that support what he claims to be "the most important migration theories" (p.51). Migrant empistemologies within these theoretical propositions, however, are neither centered or considered as the "most important" components of theorizing their own experiences. His central arguments are as follows.

First, migration should be conceptualized as an intrinsic part of broader processes of development, social transformation, and globalization. Second, migration processes have internal dynamics based on social networks that are a testimony to the agency of migrants. Third, although migrants have access to limited forms of agency, we should not ignore the multiple political and social processes that constrain migrants. Last, insights from various theories operate at different levels of analysis and focus on different aspects of migration (Castles, 2014, p.51-52). All four points are conceptualized through a nation-state-centered lens with little to no context on colonial histories of social exclusion of Indigenous communities across the Americas. Furthermore, the effort to include the relationship between Chicanx and Indigenous communities along the southwest as part of the broder process of development, social transformation, and globalization are absent.

The colonialist framework above also prescribes the identity of "foreign citizens" for migrants and juxtaposes this identity against "native born" citizens. The temporal trap here is exemplified in the form of generational citizenship and its designation of who belongs within the nation-state borders and who is still condemned to the periphery. Additionally, the "native born" category used in migration scholarship gives claim to nation state ownership by white European descendants. This issue of nativity and belonging is raised by Anzalúa in her idea of fronteras as a mechanism that is set up to distinguish "us" and "them." The use of categories such as "native born" is an example of how temporality is used in the social sciences and sociology to distinguish European migration to the U.S. as the foundational point of reference for current disctinctions of who is considered to be "foreign."

Still, the most prominent scholars who have employed this colonialist framework on Mexican migration to the U.S. have taken these arguments as a central guide to understanding both macro and micro motivations for migration. For example, the seminal work of Douglas Massey (1994) on Mexican migration has sought to provide a basis for evaluating the various empirical models and to lay the groundwork for constructing an accurate and comprehensive theory of international migration for the twenty-first century. Similar to Castles, Massey (1994) provides a topography for migration theories. Examples include neoclassical economics, which focus on differentials wages and employment conditions between countries and on migration cost. Another is the new economics of migration:

> "*this theory considers conditions in a variety of markets not just labor markets including household decisions taken to minimize risks to family income. Lastly, dual labor market theory links immigration to the structural requirements of modern industrial economies, while world system theory sees immigration as a natural consequence of economic globalization and market penetration cross national boundaries" (Massey, 1994, p.432).*

Together with Castles, these theories have been granted authority among migration scholars to the neglect of Chicanx and Indigenous knowledge systems.

While migration is an inherit part of the process of development and other social-political processes, most of these theories do not adequately interrogate their relationship to colonialism. The constraints of migrants on migrant agency and the differential wages and employment conditions did not materialize in a neutral way but a rather violent one. As abolitionist Ruth Gilmore (2016) puts it, modern industrial economies are the result of "racial capitalism." Only world-systems theory positions migration as a result of the first major cross Atlantic modern migrations by Europeans to the Americas. Unfortunately, colonialist migration theories rarely, if ever, account for the ontological tradition of Indigenous migration within the land space that we now recognize as the U.S. southwest and northern Mexican borderlands.

Other migration scholars have provided a more nuanced approach to recognize the gendered (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Karjanen, 2008), racial and ethnic (Bonilla-Silva, 2008; Chambram, 1997; Feagin, 2016; Jimenez, 2008) experiences of Latino migration within the social structure of the U.S. The fact remains, however, that these social scientists continue to conceptulaize within the dominant theoretical models specified above, which result in further reproduction of the colonized epistemology in question. Out of epistemological necessity, Non-western subjects in academic spaces create their own disciplinary homes to challenge the myths of "universality" and modernity. Chicanx Studies is one of those intellectual spaces.

Resisting the temporal trap is necessary and a possible step towards decolonizing migration studies.

Diversifying Ways of Knowing

Traditional disciplines such as sociology can benefit from reaching beyond Europe for their theoretical borders. This is important for at least two reasons. One is so that social scientists do not collapse migration within one universal structure of knowledge. This is not to say that they should not come to agree on one encompassing theory of migration, but rather that they should stay clear of monopolizing knowledge from a European standpoint. Secondly, doing so is dangerous because of the potential (re) creation of categories that subordinate migrating communities into simple variable. As Saldaña-Portillo (2016) explains, too often the birth of humanism is narrated as a northern European development of the Enlightenment and dismisses the histories and knowledge of migrant communities.

Within Mexican and Chicanx communities, we have seen how anthropologist, sociologist, political scientist and others have dehumanized and reduced our experiences to plot lines on graphs. These are two reasons that scholars outside of 'traditional' and colonizing disciplines have sought to decolonize western knowledge systems. Chicanx Studies and other ethnic studies disciplines recognize the need to diversify ways of knowing. In doing so, it disrupts Eurocentric versions of reality that distort the ontology of cultural groups. We must first ask, how did we reach this epistemological moment? The following sub-section will provide a deeper contextualization of how modernity shapes/dominates worldviews and epistemologies. Additionally, it will clarify the coloniality/modernity conceptual framework for the study of migration.

The Colonialty of Knowing and Knowledge Production

This sub-section broadly highlights the relationship between coloniality/modernity, empire, and their centrality for the development of sociology. Linking these concepts to the discipline of sociology reveals some of the hidden assumptions, limitations, and epistemic privileging in the study of migration. For Chicanxs, our narratives of migratory movement in our ancestral continent has been swept into the logic of western epistemologies. First, there are some key characteristics of coloniality and modernity that we must consider.

Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) refers to coloniality as "the long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (p.243). For Maldonado, coloniality is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. Coloniality successfully outlives formal colonialism because of the nature in which colonialism rooted systematic structures, such as universities and schools, in an effort to subjugate any other form of knowledge outside of European rationality. Coloniality is essentially interested in the relationship between knowledge and power.

Modernity, on the other hand, is assumed to be the apex of civilization and humanity. To be modern is to be enlightened, rational, and human. This concept is rooted in western philosophy and has come to define our cultural norms. One important aspect of modernity is how it has been used to define those who possess knowledge. More importantly it also defines who possesses humanity. In linking both knowledge and humanness modernity has violently separated Chicanxs from their sense of self, cultural identities, and their ancestral migratory routes in the Americas. Decolonial scholars examine coloniality and modernity in relation to one another.

Similarly, Arturo Escobar (2007) engages the relationship between coloniality and modernity and provides a conceptual guide that presupposes a series of postulations that distinguish coloniality from established theories of modernity:

> *"(1) There is an emphasis on locating the origin of modernity with the conquest of the Americas and control of the Atlantic after 1492; (2) a persistent attention to colonialism and the making of the*

> *capitalist world system as constitutive of modernity; (3) the adoption of a world perspective in the explanation of modernity, in lieu of a view of modernity as an intra-European phenomena (Vacuum effect); (4) the identification of the domination of others outside the European core as a necessary dimension of modernity; (5) Eurocentricism as the knowledge form of modernity/coloniality" (p.184).*

Colonialist migration theories migration fail to center these propositions as they relate to the way we study Mexican migration to the U.S. or Chicanx peoples' legacies of migration.

Take for example Escobar's first proposition about the emphasis to locate the origin of modernity, conquest, and control. The conquest of the Mexica empire began in the Gulf Coast region, home to the Huasteco and Totonac people. The Spanish interfered with their previously established migratory routes to the interior regions of Anahuac (Mesoamerica) as these routes became controlled for the purposes of transporting coffee, tobacco, sugar, and minerals to the shores of Andalusia, Spain. Conquest also involved the violently imposition of Catholicism that disrupted Huasteco and Totonac cultural autonomy to practice their religion freely and their relationship to land. Modernity's ordering of Indigenous society brought new conditions for forced migration that included the enslavement of Indigenous peoples. This enslavement process redistributed Totonac people to the Caribbean and Arawak Indigenous people to the Mexican Gulf Coast. The redistribution, reorganization, and dehumanization process were all instrumental in the conquest of Indigenous territories. Additionally, the logic of modernity also provided the condition and rationale for the importation of enslaved Africans to Mexico.

Other scholars, like Walter Mignolo (2005), emphasize Escobar's second and third propositions by claiming coloniality as the darker side of modernity. For him, both coloniality and modernity are opposite sides of the same coin reinforcing one another. Mignolo (2005) asserts that one cannot be modern without being colonial; and if you are on the colonial side of the spectrum you have to transact with modernity—you cannot ignore it. Coloniality is thus interconnected with European expansion beginning in the late 15th century. It refers to the logical structure of colonial domination underlying the Spanish, Dutch, British, and U.S control of the Atlantic economy and politics, and from there the control and management of almost the entire planet. In each of the particular imperial periods of colonialism the same logic was maintained; only power changed hands (Mignolo, 2005). As Escobar (2007) points out, modernity did not come to existence via an intra-European phenomenon or vacuum effect. The 'modernization' of Europe would not have become a reality without colonial expansion in the Americas, the extraction of land and mineral resources, and the creation of a new world economy based on a racial division of labor.

Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (2007) agrees with Mignolo, Escobar, and Maldonado-Torres in so far as their understanding that coloniality is still the most general form of domination in the world today once colonialism, as an explicit political order, was destroyed. For Quijano (2007), coloniality of power was conceived together with America and Western Europe, and with the social category of 'race' as the key element of the social classification of colonized and colonizers. New social identities were prescribed all over the world: whites, Indians, Negroes, yellows, olives, using physiognomic traits of the peoples as external manifestations of their 'racial' nature. Thus, race becomes a critical social marker of belonging in the modern colonial world's economic and cultural system. Without considering these historical realities as we study the movement and migration of human beings we will continue to have an incomplete picture of what it means to migrate for different cultural groups.

Very few sociologists have ventured to critique the racism that is inherit to the colonial epistemologies produced in migration studies. However, Puerto Rican sociologist Ramon Grosfoguel (2014) emphasizes that "epistemic racism refers to a hierarchy of colonial domination whereby knowledge produced by Western subjects within the 'zone of being' are considered to be superior to the knowledge produced by non-western colonial subjects in the 'zone of non-being." The power relationship between Western migration intellectuals, such as Massey, and Mexican migrant communities are asymmetrical in their agency to produce a narrative of and about Mexican migration to the U.S. Without the recognition of the inherent nature of this relationship, as noted by Grosfoguel, colonial epistemologies simply go unchallenged and normalized under the guise of objectivity and science. Decolonizing migration studies takes up the challenge to historicize the development of the colonial world-views imposed on migrating Mexican and Chicanx communites and provide a critique of colonial epistemologies.

Decolonizing as Process

> *"We have a tradition of migration, a tradition of long walks. Today we are witnessing la migracion de los pueblos mexicanos, the return odyssey to the historical/mythological Aztlán. This time, the traffic is from south to north." –* ***Gloria Anzaldúa***

Decolonization as a process is an intentional resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands. It is engagement for the ultimate purpose of overturning colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation. The quote above is a reclamation of both social and territorial social space. Anzaldúa notes the antecedent migratory caminos commonly undervalued in migration narratives concerning the multi-cultural Indigenous peoples of the Southwest and Mexican interior. The temporal trap is avoided in her consideration of migration as a social act that extends beyond the nation-state era. This act is in itself an intentional act to decolonize migration studies. From this perspective, migrants labeled as unauthorized citizens are the Shadow-Beasts of a nation-state centered on settler colonialism.

Decolonization as a process shifts the conversation of immigration reform to one of Chicanx autonomy and their broader relationship with Indigenous land sovereignty for the multiple tribal communities in the U.S. According to American Indian scholar Dylan Miner (2014), Chicanxs exist within the U.S. land space as the largest detribalized diasporic communities. If we view Chicanxs as aboriginal people to what is now parts of the U.S. political territory, we cease to "foreignize" people of Mexican descent in lands where their ancestors have migrated for millennia. George Hartly (2012), mentions that Chicanx Indigeneity provides us with a hinge concept for sorting out the various lines of colonial hegemony in North America and thus for conceptualizing Indigeneity outside of colonialist boundaries and colonial logics.

We see this decolonial strategy reflected within Anzaldúa's quote above. What she provides in this short, yet impactful statement is the intentionality of Indigenous Chicanxs' migratory systems. It is an assertion to the ontological question of migration to and from the mythical site of Aztlán. Colonial logics renamed Aztlán to Nueva España and then again as the states of Arizona, Colorado, California, and New Mexico. In doing so it also separated the multiple Indigenous communities that shared space in what is now the states of Baja California del Norte, Sonora, and Chihuahua. As Hartly (2012) recalls, the U.S-Mexican border "ends up not simply dividing Mexicans into two different national groups on either side of the border but at the same time dividing Mexicans from native peoples in the newly expanded United States" (p. 58). Renaming space, time, and identities is one of the many violent acts of colonialism and modernity. Anzaldúa (re)claims of our existence along the borderlands and into the interiors of both nation-states with her acknowledgment of long-walks as a Chicanx ontological practice.

In her second chapter of Borderlands/La Frontera she writes, "What we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other. It claims that human nature is limited and cannot evolve into something better" (Anzaldúa,1987,p.19) Similar to the physical/political border, Chicanx people have internalized the message of western modernity that indicates that they can only be assigned to one identity at a time. Mexican or American Immigrant or Indigenous. Through her writing we find epistemic moments that disrupts the assertions of western modernity. For example, Anzaldúa (1987) states, "This land was Mexican once, was Indian always and is. And will be again" (p.3). Somos atravesados in the sense of the spaces where we live, the borders that we cross, and the modes in which we think. In this case as decolonial thinkers and theorists we become epistemic atravesados.

Unlike the sociological theorist mentioned above, Anzaldúa does not fall into the temporal trap of the nation-state in relation to the migratory life ways of Mexican and Chicanx peoples. She mentions that the migration of these peoples from Aztlán to central Mexico begins before the colonial era around the year A.D. 820 (Anzaldúa,1987, p.37). By extending our memory of migration back to the 9th century, Anzaldúa creates temporal space linking Chicanx to their Indigenous conocimiento of what it means to migrate. Our history and civilization does not begin with the arrival of Europeans. In the same spirit, our humanity didn't end at their arrival either.

Additionally, she critiques western epistemologies' claims to "objectivity." In her chapter titled "Entering the Serpent" she states, "In trying to become 'objective', Western culture made 'objects' of things and people when it distanced itself from them, thereby losing 'touch' with them" (Anzaldúa,1987,p.37). Anzaldúa thus raises our awareness of both objectivity and time as two significant elements of modernity. How then do we continue to push back on these deeply embedded "scientific" ideas? One significant way is through art.

Through this form of cultural expression, Chicanxs have created transformational spaces of education and self-determination. Art is often one of the most accessible forms of cultural resistance and recreation through our own imaginaries. These imaginaries are informed by our particular communities' epistemologies. For Chicanx, lowriding has been framed by western ideologies as a delinquent act tied to Cholos, Pachucos, and Vatos. These very terms have also been reconfigured in their meaning(s) as markers of criminality. However, Dylan Miner (2014) subverts these racialized and incorrect views. He connects lowriding to a much older traditional practice set by our ancestors that involves moving slowly from one place to another establishing deep roots along the way. With a firm understanding of settler-colonialism as a political project that unsettles multiple Indigenous populations in the Americas, Miner uses low riding as an expression of Chicanx ontological practice to bridge aboriginal communities along the U.S.-Canadian border with Chicanx diasporic communities.

He reaffirms the "tradition of long walks" as proposed by Anzaldúa in the opening quote. Miner (2014) mentions that Chicanx art [and lowriding] is a unique philosophical modality that proposes new ways of being in the world that is linked to older forms of Indigeneity. He engages the art of slow movement as a metaphor that repositions various temporalities and delinks from traditional western accounts of linear histories. By doing so, Miner synchronizes pre-colonial, colonial, and contemporary ontologies that inform Chicanx peoples' decision to migrate. Both Miner and Anzaldúa occupy in epistemic territories within the academy in order to (re)conceptualize what Fanon refers to as a new humanism. Decolonial thinkers and practitioners emphasize Fanons' concept in order to create new ways of being, knowing and doing.

Traditional sociologists have failed to account for what Anzaldúa (1984) claims as an indigenous "return" to the place of origin, Aztlán, thus making Chicanx originally and secondarily Indigenous to the Southwest. If we consider the contemporary practices of low riding and accounts by Chicanx feminist scholars, we get a much broader and deeper conceptualization of what it means to move from place to place for people of Mexican descent. Migration studies can begin to open ground for epistemic shifts should they begin to consider these historical trajectories that pre-date the U.S.-Mexico border.

Are we as Chicanxs a migrating people? Yes. Are we "new immigrants" in the U.S.? No. If we can say that "Chicanx are indigenous to Mexico but not the United States, we immediately run into the problem of determining which historical boundaries of either state we are using to determine such national (and epistemological) claims" (George Hartly, 2012, p.56). As Bettina Ng'Weno (2012) asserts, "Indigeneity provides a space for autonomy and for control over community and territory" (p. 202). Furthermore, Miner (2014) deepens our conceptualization of Indigeneity as an active cultural category that represents the inextinguishable right of Indigenous peoples to self-determine who they are, how they govern themselves, and how they define their own knowledge and aesthetic systems. Migration studies as a field has an opportunity to reevaluate the conversation of and about (im)migration, international spatial and temporal borders, and migrant labeling especially as they relate to Mexican and Chicanx people.

One aspect that migration studies rarely considers is that "migrants do not arrive in an empty neutral space, but in metropolitan spaces that are already 'polluted' by racial power relations with long colonial history, colonial imaginary, colonial knowledge and ethnic/racial hierarchies liked to a history of empire" (Grosfoguel, 2014,p. 7). When this history is considered it is often a marginal comment and decentralized from the analysis. If migration studies continue along the same modernistic path of dismissing Chicanx epistemologies there will be very little room for transformational possibilities.

Envisioning liberation of detribalized Indigenous Chicanxs begins by just that, envisioning it. Shifting away from referencing Mexican and Mexican descendants as foreign populations in the U.S. can have profound effects on how future generations understand their history of migration. Chicanx scholarship has to be taken seriously as an intellectual project if we are to heal the damage caused by modernity and coloniality at every personal and institutional level.

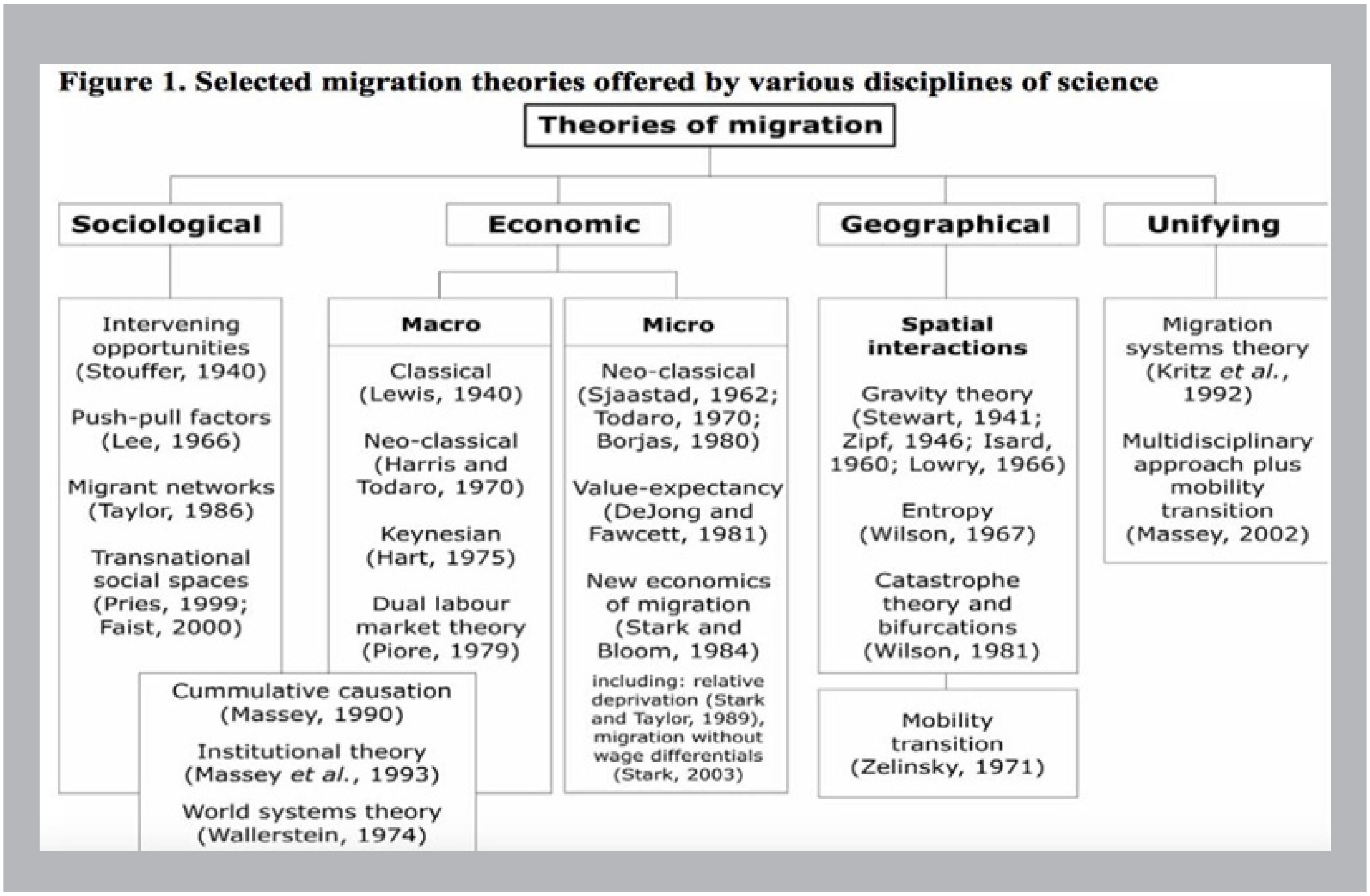
Figure 1. Selected migration theories offered by various disciplines of science
Theories of migration
Sociological
Economic
Geographical
Unifying
Intervening opportunities (Stouffer, 1940)
Push-pull factors (Lee, 1966)
Migrant networks (Taylor, 1986)
Transnational social spaces (Pries, 1999; Faist, 2000)
Macro
Classical (Lewis, 1940)
Neo-classical (Harris and Todaro, 1970)
Keynesian (Hart, 1975)
Dual labour market theory (Piore, 1979)
Micro
Neo-classical (Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1970; Borjas, 1980)
Value-expectancy (DeJong and Fawcett, 1981)
New economics of migration (Stark and Bloom, 1984)
including: relative deprivation (Stark and Taylor, 1989), migration without wage differentials (Stark, 2003)
Spatial interactions
Gravity theory (Stewart, 1941; Zipf, 1946; Isard, 1960; Lowry, 1966)
Entropy (Wilson, 1967)
Catastrophe theory and bifurcations (Wilson, 1981)
Mobility transition (Zelinsky, 1971)
Migration systems theory (Kritz et al., 1992)
Multidisciplinary approach plus mobility transition (Massey, 2002)
Cummulative causation (Massey, 1990)
Institutional theory (Massey et al., 1993)
World systems theory (Wallerstein, 1974)

Conclusion

Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2011) reminds us that decolonial thought does not refer to a single theoretical school, but rather points to a family of diverse positions that share a view that coloniality is a fundamental problem in the modern age. Decolonizing migration studies will not come at the cost of abandoning the useful sociological tools that are widely used today but rather to balance the asymmetrical power relationships between knowledge production and the institutions that structure it. To decolonize is to delink from an understanding that conflates Europe with modernity and renders the process of becoming modern (Bhambra, 2011). Scholars invested in understanding Mexican migration cannot simply ignore the colonizer/colonized relationship steeped in academic tradition. This is in fact violent epistemic privileging. Shahjahan (2012) points out that "transformational resistance is a proactive effort to transform colonizer/colonized subjectivity, colonial discourses and material structures" (p.220). Transformational resistance affords multiple non-hierarchical epistemologies to coexist and recognition of others as full human beings. It is a mutual respect of cosmologies, languages, and epistemologies. These are some fundamental charachteristics of decolonizing migration studies.

The decolonial process cannot occur without first recognizing the colonial legacies embedded in the social sciences and beyond. The fact remains that Chicanx scholars understood their colonial situation and continue to understand their positionality in relation to U.S. cultural, political, and social hegemony. Los pueblos Mexicanos will continue to migrate in their ancestral territories. Will the social sciences continue to name this population "immigrants" and reinforce the idea that they are a foreign population? One can work intentionally to correct these epistemic fallacies and continue to challenge the coloniality of power that legitimizes these false narratives of Chicanxs.

Lastly, Fernando Coronil (1998) with a persistent eye on (post) modern forms of empire writes; "Imperial-subaltern encounters occur in social landscapes structured by differing modes of exploiting nature and labor.

The social identities formed in these landscapes cannot be analyzed without reference to these forms of exploitation." This solidifies once more the estranged encounters and relationship between scholarship and community. However, what is important here is our ability to reenvision these social landscapes via art, by retelling of our migratory narratives, by low riding, and claiming our indigenous ancestry to this colonial space.

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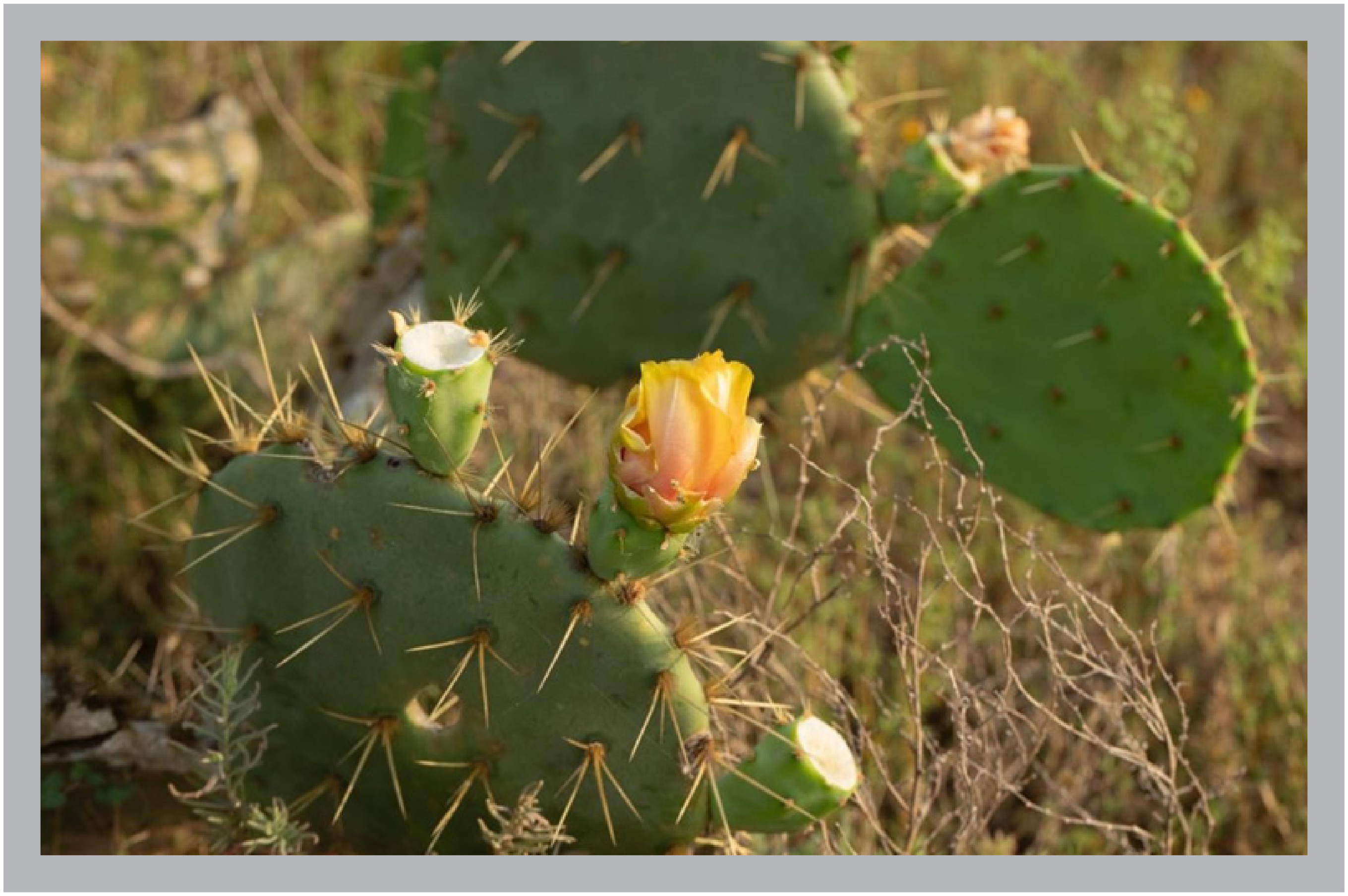
Nopal at La Sal del Rey, San Manuel - Linn, Tx.



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Leadership Development through the Study of the Lived Experience

Gonzalo Salazar

Reflection of the lived experience occurs in the solitude of leadership and it is through reflection that educational leaders acquire knowledge. A deep dive into the reflections of the lived experience leads to discernment and it is at this intersect that leadership finds wisdom. The rich data of the lived experience can serve as a valuable resource in leadership development but maximizing the value of the analysis of the lived experience necessitates sharing the findings in a manner that builds capacity in the next generation of leaders. The vehicle used to share the findings is as important as the data we draw from experiences that shape our lives and character.

Autoethnography, as a method of research, allows us to generate and share data in meaningful ways and enables researchers and participants to acquire a depth of knowledge comparable to conventional methods. It allows the researcher to use story and testimonio as a vehicle on a journey through data collection and allows us to arrive at a depth of understanding through which we can draw conclusions and contribute to a body of knowledge. This approach employs story and testimonio as powerful tools we can draw on for leadership development and effectiveness. Stories can serve as guideposts for our elders and policymakers in our communities (Brayboy & Dehyle, 2000). Researchers reveal that stories have a place in our communities and our lives because they shape our character, remind us of our origins, and serve as lessons for the younger members of our communities (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010; Guajardo, Guajardo, Janson and Millitelo, 2016; Romero, 2005; Yosso, 2005; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2009).

Pelias (2003) states that an autoethnography "let's you use your self to get to culture" and places the self at the center of the study. A deep dive into the lived experience can increase leadership effectiveness and deliver the relevance that allows the learner to achieve cultural awareness and a better understanding of the self. The following are critical leadership functions: a leaders' understanding of their own identity; how education, culture, upbringing, values and morals helped shape the self (Leary, & Tangney, 2002; Anzaldúa, 2015; and Guajardo & Guajardo, 2017) and how the leader functions as a contributing member of the organization (Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Capturing the lived experience and making sense of the world around us can help validate who we are as individuals within an organization and may even help us create the conditions in which people change themselves.

Autoethnography as a method of research represents an opportunity to employ the power of story and testimonio in the development of culturally sensitive leadership in the field of education. Demographers hold that by the year 2050, our nation will be increasingly more diverse and that there will be no racial or ethnic majority among the general population of the United States with Hispanics as the main force driving this demographic change (Murdock, 2007; U.S. Census, 2010; America's Voice, 2014). Gandara and Rumberger (2009) affirm that public schools in the United States have represented "the great equalizer" or the place where assimilation into the mainstream is inculcated, regardless of the culture that students bring to school. This view of an acculturation approach is devoid of the benefits of validating the cultural capital and funds of knowledge that students already possess when they enroll in the public schools. As a result, most immigrant students who enter school as English Learners (EL) have low achievement and attainment (Gandara and Rumberger, 2009; Murdock, 2007, America's Voice, 2014). As the demographic landscape shifts, how our nation will manage the well documented disparities in education and economic indicators afflicting minorities will continue to be a dilemma facing national leaders tasked with adopting policy solutions (Murdock, 2007, America's Voice, 2014).

Our ability to help all students succeed in a state that is currently educating a minority-majority necessitates educational leaders with the ability to achieve cultural synchronicity and demonstrate an awareness of the importance of reaching cultural congruence. Given the needs of the students in our classrooms, a leader must also possess the ability to enhance the social and cultural capital and recognize the resistance that may arise from the pedagogies of the home (Yosso, 2005; and Delgado Bernal, 2001).

The following are excerpts of an autoethnographic study completed recently. It illustrates the power and effectiveness of story and testimonio. The highly personalized accounts of the life of an immigrant whose life journey began south of the Rio Bravo/Rio Grande and continues al otro lado, in the borderlands of South Texas.

Life in the Borderlands

This concept of "al otro lado" [on the other side] was one of those things no one had to explain. You just grew up understanding "al otro lado" from the context of conversations. Geographically, the Rio Bravo/ Rio Grande was an international boundary but in the daily lives of those of us who grew up in la frontera, it amounted to nothing more than part of the landscape. We have relatives on both sides of the river and our lifestyles consisted of an interdependence of the social structure on both sides of the river.

We were living in matamoros, tamaulipas, mexico, and making ends meet was difficult. Papá worked for the coca cola bottling company until they announced they would close the plant in matamoros. He subsequently obtained a work visa "al otro lado" and he was gone all the time. Our abuelos filled the void when papá went to go work "al otro lado".

My papá had gone to work in the shrimping, a booming industry in the 1970s that drew laborers such as papá. He told us he was a descabezador [header]. He went from deliveryman for Coca Cola to heading shrimp on The Scatterd Brain, a shrimp boat that docked in the Port of Brownsville. The shrimping industry paid well, and it was enough to sustain a family of seven children. There was a trade-off, though. My papá's hands were suddenly course and he was gone for up to thirty days at a time. He was home for three days, at the most, and gone again. He was our spiritual leader, a disciplinarian, and our role model. When he was away from home, we missed him dearly.

So You are Leaving for La United

During this period my father took up a new job that had things looking up for us. One day, mamá and papá told us we would be leaving our home in Matamoros--we were going to go live al otro lado. A shrimper's salary, family sacrifices, and a conservative approach to finances helped pool enough money together for a life changing decision. Papá had given a down payment on a wood frame home in the Ebony Heights subdivision. The home was within walking distance of an elementary school, which was important to our parents. Abuelo teased us, "Así que se van para La United?" [So you are leaving for The United?] It was the most he could do to keep himself from sobbing uncontrollably. He and abuela had warmed up to the idea, the noise, the mischief and havoc that accompanied raising the original Magnificent Seven (seven grandchildren) in the addition our grandparents made to their home several years back.

As soon as it was clear that we would be moving to a new home in Brownsville, mamá was true to form and began teaching us what few English words she knew – mostly nouns like "win-dow", "ta-ble", "mo-ther", "fa-ther". Suddenly, we had become imaginaries, in the borderlands of culture (Saldivar, 2006). It seems somewhat comical now, but it was a crash course in the English language--it did not come close to preparing us for the culture shock that we would experience.

I recall the day our parents loaded the entire family into our station wagon and heading towards the Gateway International Bridge. When we arrived at the immigration offices, we lined up oldest-to-youngest. I recall how cold the whole experience was that day. I do not mean the temperature. Perhaps it was the staff was unfamiliar to us, or we did not know the language, but the process itself was cold and the offices bland. My siblings and I had already received our immunizations. I am not certain if the inoculations were at this same office or a doctor's office. I remember however, that it was after this visit to the immigration office that we were able to go on these trips to get groceries al otro lado and eventually to our new home in Brownsville. Our mamá now had a set of resident alien cards for each of us that she kept in a fold up wallet and only rolled them out when we crossed the international bridge.

Living in a State of Nepantla

We left our home at Lauro Villar #24 on October of 1974 and moved into a three-bedroom house at 1793 Stanford Avenue, a two-bedroom, one bath wood frame structure with a garage that at some point had been converted to a third bedroom. The entire layout was different from the only home we had ever known. My favorite feature was the large picture window in the living room that let in a good amount of daylight. We had a fenced in back yard that paled in comparison to abuela's garden, but it did have two mature ash trees that provided plenty of shade and somewhat compensated for the change. Abuelo and papá brought the pieces of furniture from our home in Matamoros and that familiarity made the transition a little smoother. As soon as we were settled in, mamá and papá took us to the Gulf-Mart next to the H.E.B on Boca Chica Boulevard and bought us school clothes. We would no longer wear the required uniforms of our school in Mexico, plaid shirts with khaki pants or the white button-down shirts and white pants required for patriotic Mondays. I was looking forward to going to school, but I soon realized that I had not really grasped the concept of why mamá wanted us to learn to speak English. She told us we would have to learn to speak English at our new school, but this did not really register until we attended class on the first day.

I was entering the first grade and was assigned to Ms. Besteiro's class where we sat in rows in individual desks. All of the adults and most of the kids spoke only in English. We started the day reciting the pledge to a flag that was not familiar to me. Kids held their hand flat over their hearts instead of a military style salute. The teacher led the class from the front of the room, and I could not understand what she was saying. The few kids that spoke Spanish either whispered or said nothing most of the day. I spent most of my class time looking around the room feverishly, reading body language as I tried to keep up with my classmates. Even the alphabet displayed across the top of the blackboard in the front of the classroom was different; it was missing letters. I had no idea what was happening. One thing was similar to my school in Matamoros. Recess was the highlight of the day. Still, no one was playing la Rueda de San Miguel or La Vibora de la Mar. I wasted no time, made my way to the swing set, and later discovered what everyone meant by "the monkey bars". No one was selling raspas [snow cones] at the fence (as a street vendor did at my previous school) and although I missed that, we had this amazing playground equipment with slides, swings and monkey bars. Several kids spoke Spanish on the playground and that also made recess special.

I did well on the playground but in the classroom, I was struggling. During reading time, we were placed into groups according to our reading ability. I was either a red bird or a green bird. I know with certainty that I was not a blue bird. I was reading everything phonetically, but the words were not making sense.

> *See Pug Run. Pug Runs Fast. Run Jane Run.*
> *Ted jumps rope. See Ted jump rope. Jump Ted jump.*

I sounded out each letter the way Maestra Raquel in Matamoros had taught me, but I could not comprehend what I was saying. From the illustrations, I knew this much; the story was related to a dog, a boy and a girl. It was frustrating.

Things were strange at home also. We had settled in and we were now living al otro lado in our new home. One night, kids began showing up on our doorstep in costumes. They knocked on the door, held out a bag and said something my siblings and I did not comprehend; it sounded like /trik-e-trit/. We were confused by the entire experience but then mamá explained that there was a holiday in the United States in which children went door to door asking for candy. This holiday was foreign to us, but we were just kids and we liked the concept.

Mamá was expecting a baby again and she still cooked and did house chores as she sang her favorite songs ranchera style. She sang aloud:

> *Aquellos ojitos verdes ¿dónde se andarán paseando? Ojalá que venga a verme aunque*
> *sea de vez en cuando. Ay, ay, ay, ay, ¿Dónde andarán? Esos ojitos que me hicieron suspirar.*

As I think back to the passion withwhich she sang this song, I understand. She was expressing how much she missed looking into my father's green eyes. We all missed him. Papá spent thirty days offshore and was home for a few days. Even after our youngest sister Andrea was born, he stayed home for a week before he went back out on the shrimp boat.My abuelos visited often. They never arrived empty handed and usually brought with them items that were staples in our home in Matamoros. They brought pan dulce [sweet bread], corn tortillas, and even bottled water. We were now living in La United as my grandfather once teased, and although many things were the same, some of the very significant things in my life were different. We spoke Spanish at home, but we could not do so at school; at least not around our teachers. I have come to understand it now. I was living in a state of nepantla struggling to find my cultural identity (Anzaldúa, 1987; Hurtado & Gurin, 2004). My blood still boiled when I heard México's national anthem on Spanish television or Spanish radio stations, but I was now pledging allegiance to a different flag. Who was I? What was happening? Our world was changing. The state of confusion grew deeper as time went on.

As I moved through the grade levels, I was beginning to pick up more English. Each school year, teachers at Ebony Heights Elementary were more adamant about not allowing us to speak Spanish. On several occasions, speaking Spanish resulted in one of my teachers asking me to stand put my hand out towards her. I remember how she laid a 12" wooden ruler on the back of my hand, lifted it, and swatted it down to strike me. I was in the fourth grade when my teacher made me hold up a dictionary in each hand and asked me to raise and hold my arms up away from my body for what seemed like an eternity. Spanish was the language of poetry and the arts; it was the language of my abuelos and my padres. The entire thing was nothing more than hypocrisy. Speaking Spanish throughout the school day resulted in punishment but as the month of February drew near, students were highly encouraged to participate in the Charro Days festivities. This celebration of culture is an annual event celebrated since 1938 in the city of Brownsville, Texas during the latter part of the month of February to commemorate the Mexican heritage and the relationship that exists between the Mexican and American sides of the Rio Grande.

When my siblings and I reached a conversational proficiency level in English, things became even more convoluted. At the Salazar household, speaking English in the presence of those who did not understand it was considered ill mannered.

> *"En esta casa van a hablar Español. ¿Qué falta de respeto es ese?*
> *¿Cómo van a estar hablando en inglés delante de sus padres y sus abuelos?"*
> ***[You will speak Spanish in this house. What lack of respect is that? How can***
> ***you be speaking English in the presence of your parents and grandparents?]***

It was as though we were living a double life. I did not feel deeply rooted in either culture for a long time. We did not know it at the time, but the circumstances were forcing us to develop what Anzaldúa (1987) referred to as the mestiza-like consciousness. Circumstances warranted going in and out of both cultures and between languages. Everything was contingent on the situation or location. In time, I came to accept this as the new norm. It was only after I came to terms with this, that I was able to indulge in the best of both worlds. I was an academic tourist in the borderlands of culture (Saldivar 2006; and Pelias, 2003).

The Year the Olympics Were Held in Mexico

I was only a child and had no idea what mamá was implying when she said, "No se te olvide que naciste el año de las Olimpiadas en México." ["Remember, you were born the year that the Olympics were held in Mexico."]

The first time she mentioned it was when she was teaching me the lines to a poem but then she reminded me of this several more times throughout my young life. I had no idea what it meant and dismissed it to turn my attention to all the things that kids my age would rather do with their time. I was in middle school when I decided to look up the 1968 Olympics. My mother was no longer making reference to this event, but after all those years, I was still curious. I was in the library of Stell Middle School when I reached for an encyclopedia and learned that the XIX Olympiad was important for several reasons. It was the first time that track was run on an all-weather surface instead of the traditional cinder surface. It was the first Olympiad held in a Spanish speaking country and the platform that Tommie Smith and John Carlos, two track athletes from the U.S.A., chose to protest the oppression that African Americans had endured. Standing on the platform, receiving their respective medals, they each raised a black-gloved fist; a gesture symbolizing black power. Their gesture was an attempt to communicate to the world the oppression that had been at the center of the Civil Rights Movement in America.

It was a moment that had a ripple effect throughout the U.S.A. and across the globe. An event that would be etched in history and in the minds of those that lived through that era. As I read through the encyclopedia, I realized that my mother was attempting to use that event to inspire me to deliver a passionate presentation of the poem "Los colores de las razas" [The Color of Races] during an event at La Plaza Municipal Theatre in Matamoros. It was then that I understood she was drawing inspiration from this event and that she was attempting to transmit that to me. It is these moments suspended in time in which our parents transmit knowledge, values, an appreciation for the arts through the pedagogies of the home. Reading through that encyclopedia helped me realize that others had endured much more than the state of confusion that I was experiencing, and I had a better understanding of the meaning of the poem.

I was not sure what had changed. It was in middle school that I began to realize teachers did not seem as concerned about students speaking Spanish. Still, there was something rather ironic about the middle school experience. I had reached a level of proficiency in which I was more fluent in English, and now the school curriculum required that I take Spanish as a foreign language.

The Joy of Music and the Generosity of a Classmate

The school band program nurtured an appreciation for the arts and opened up a new world of opportunities for my siblings and me. We could not afford to purchase an instrument and our band director knew it. Papá had an injury on a shrimp boat and this marked the beginning of a financial downturn for our family. Our band director had each of us try out for brass and woodwind instruments that the school provided. Martha played the bassoon, Felipe played the baritone, I played the tuba, Rosie played the oboe, Claudia and Andrea played the trumpet while Ricardo and Sotera pursued other interests. It was loud around the house as we were often practicing different sheet music. I am not sure how our parents put up with it. We traveled with the band program throughout the Rio Grande Valley for performances and competitions and even went to Six Flags. It is difficult to explain but this was a big deal for us because we had never been out of the Valley.

There were times when we went hungry at these events because our parents could not afford to give us money to buy a snack; we just did not have the means. Once at Six Flags in San Antonio, when Mike Maza, a trumpet player in the symphonic band approached me as I watched from a distance as everyone made their purchases at concessions. He asked if I was hungry and offered to buy me a meal. I have never forgotten his kind gesture and compassion. He was my classmate but that day, he was a blessing to me. I still pray for God's blessings over Mike.

Making the All-Valley band and competing in the Pigskin Jubilee or the City of Palms Concert, site reading, ensemble or concert band competitions was a great experience for us. Each time we put on the band uniform we shed the clothing of poverty. For the brief moments that we were competing, we were equal. We were only being compared by ability and according to the skills developed through hours of practice. We brought home medals and ribbons for site reading, for placing First Chair All Valley and Division I ensemble competitions. My mother was proud, and she told stories of our success to anyone who was willing to listen. She displayed the medals over the console television in our living room. Whenever anyone visited, she showed them awards, told of our achievements, and she embellished. We blushed as she held up medals that were clearly labeled All Valley Band Competition and told our relatives that we were competing at the state level. It was her way of letting us know that she valued our achievements and her way of communicating high expectations. We had too much respect for her to correct her in the presence of our guests. Our participation in the band made the talent portion of the annual Christmas Program that Abuela Rosita hosted on Christmas Eve each year even better. We loaded our instruments into my father's station wagon and crossed into Matamoros to our grandparent's home. Our grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins cheered us on as we played solos and ensembles. We created many memories and it was at these family gatherings that we forgot of all the struggles and where we appreciated being part of a large family.

Conclusion

The excerpts of this autoethnographic study provide insights into the lived experience of an immigrant in south Texas who once found himself in a state of *nepantla*, a term in Nahuatl used by the indigenous people of Mexico that represents a concept of living between two cultures. The essence of the story captured here plays out repeatedly in the lived experience of students in classrooms throughout our nation.

Twenty-one-million elementary and secondary students of immigrant families were enrolled in the nation's public schools in October of 2016, representing 26% of all students (U.S. Census, 2017). As demographics continue to shift across Texas and the nation, the effectiveness of culturally congruent leadership and the degree to which we are willing to achieve cultural synchronicity between organizational leaders and the community of learners will have an impact on the academic experience and overall success of the students we serve. It is clear that education in a democratic society will continue to have a special place and purpose but if we are to succeed, educational leaders cannot continue to operate under deficit thinking. Educational leaders must possess the ability to recognize the importance of validating the social and cultural capital of every student and the resistance that may arise from the pedagogies of the home.

The research study suggests that staff in school districts serving a minority or diverse population of students would benefit from professional development that increases the awareness of the benefits of culturally congruent teaching. When children enroll in school, they arrive with a wealth of cultural capital and funds of knowledge. We must work with a moral imperative to create opportunities for children to share their stories and what their journey has taught them. We should encourage students to use narrative and language to arrive at a better understanding of the self. We should also be prepared to share our stories with them because it is at this juncture, that we can help them know the self. We must work with a moral imperative to validate the language and culture, morals and values of every student so that no child in our classrooms resides in an in between state of nepantla. This will allow us to create meaningful relationships with our students. It is how we can improve teaching and learning, strengthen the fiber of a democratic society and improve the human condition.

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Río Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands | Spring 2020

“Mi Hija Va a Ser Maestra” Overview of the Auto-Ethnography

Eva Torres

ABSTRACT

The educator who takes on the task of the principal leader of a campus must be staunchly in touch with the inner self, the source from which they will draw foundational decisions at the most critical of times, when it is imperative that speech and action be aligned with ideals and beliefs (Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, 2005). My doctoral dissertation, an autoethnography that is an illustrative introspective exercise for instructional leaders, is a critical self-reflection that identifies the factors that informed me as a life-long educator and a campus administrator. This article is a window to the content of that dissertation. The manuscript provides legitimacy to testimonio and the concept of story to build relative context and meaning (Ellis, 2004; Guajardo and Guajardo, 2013) between my marginalized childhood in a small Central Texas town and my successful adulthood in the field of educational leadership. The methodology included critical interpretations of the literary selections, utilizing analytical frameworks to derive meaning from the stories. In order to make “personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging” (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, p. 277), I chose to share my story, thus giving agency to critical self-reflection as a discipline in leadership effectiveness.

“Mi Hija Va Ser Maestra” Overview of the Auto-Ethnography

> *“¡Ándale! ¡Súbete, m’ija! ¡Fíjate que ya moví la casa!”*
> *My father’s face was beaming as he leaned out the window of his little red pick-up truck,*
> *right hand on the wheel and left arm reaching out to me, his youngest child and only daughter,*
> *standing, tears streaming down my face, in the middle of the barren lot in the heart of the*
> *barrio where our little pink frame home used to be.*

The memory of that day is etched indelibly in my mind. I grew up in that pink house, a scant few blocks from my elementary school, across the street from my Abuelito Ramón and next door to my Madrina Pifania. That particular day, much like any other day of the week, I had walked to school in the morning, and our little pink house had been nestled in our small barrio lot, in between the big silver butane gas tank on one side and my mom’s pretty pink roses on the other. The shock of the barren lot and the missing house upon my return from school that day was overwhelming. Nothing other than my father’s familiar face would have been able to calm my fears— Papi!—My Papi always made things right.

Introduction

The “rightness” in this case becomes increasingly clear as I reflect on my memories of that day, in the mid-1960s, when my father moved our house to the “other side of the tracks” (Montejano, 1987; Rubel, 1966), entering a space and traversing an invisible line that was as tangible as the queue of Anglo homeowners that stood and stared as our little pink frame home was deposited smack onto the once-empty lot in their once-only white neighborhood. The history of that day and other significant experiences in my life are the basis for the autoethnographic study that comprised my doctoral dissertation, a scholarly work which gave agency to testimonio and the concept of story to build relative context and meaning (Ellis, 2004; Guajardo and Guajardo, 2013) between my marginalized childhood in a small Central Texas town and my successful adulthood as an instructional leader.

This article is a window to the purpose of my dissertation. By making "personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, p. 277), I produced a critical self-reflection, expressed through a narrative mode, which introspectively identified the factors that informed me as an instructional leader. As I acquired a greater self-awareness of my personal history and the experiences that shaped my life, I gained a stronger conviction in the importance of introspection and reflection—not only for myself, but for other educators in the field whose decisions have life altering effects on the many children with whom we are entrusted. The stories included in this article are reflective of the greater body of work narrated in the dissertation and utilized as springboards for self insight and understanding.

Introspective Narrative

The untapped power of the introspective narrative can serve as a highly effective tool. An exercise in introspection and reflection, expressed through story, can reveal a deeper understanding of personal behaviors, it can create and re-create virtual experiences, and it can uncover strong, meaningful connections. Chávez (2012) states that "stories are essential to human understanding" and that they are "the ways humans make sense of their worlds" (p. 340). Bochner (2012) expresses much the same sentiment by commenting that "emphasizing the stories people tell about their lives…[is] both a means of knowing and a way to telling" (p. 155). Thus, my work utilizes the concept of story to privilege the emotional spaces and inform the reader through the organic medium of lived experience. By deviating from the traditional modality, an auto-ethnographer's "unconcealed and unapologetic use of emotion" as depicted through the concept of story "contains the possibility to position readers in an unconventional spot: squarely alongside …the Chicana protagonist" (Chávez, 2012, p. 341).

As the auto-ethnographer, I positioned myself at the center of my narratives, drawing privilege as a "Chicana protagonist" (Chávez, 2012, p. 341) to use my stories as tools which contribute to my effectiveness and inform my work as an educational leader. Thus, this work is an "act of meaning" whose function and "expressive forms [are] for making sense of lived experiences and communicating it to others" (Bochner, 2012, p. 155). My stories provide a critical lens focused on the marginalization of a proud people and the way in which a determined father broke the barriers to create a space of privilege for his only daughter, and the realization of his greatest dream: Mi Hija va ser Maestra.

Introspection and Instructional Leadership

Shapiro and Stefkovitch (2011), "recognizing the complexities of being an educational leader in today's society" (p. 27), advocate "an understanding of oneself" (p. 23) and emphasize the manner in which "life stories and critical incidents" impact our decision-making. With that in mind, I utilized an introspective approach as recommended by Shapiro and Stefkovitch (2011) to analyze the impact of my upbringing on my professional career and the actions and decisions made in that capacity. I strived to bring meaning to the manner in which I approached my different roles in education by delving into the spaces of stored memory to gain a greater self-awareness, and to understand and appreciate the value of my upbringing. Those memories were shared as organic data to uphold the assertion that understanding the self and realizing that "the value of a reflective life" (Rodríguez, 1982, p. 78) is a vital component of instructional leadership.

This type of critical self-awareness, this self-reflection, can be a revelation for educational leaders. Exploring the personal development of my own identity through autoethnography and critical self-reflection as the "Chicana protagonist" (Chávez, 2012, p. 341) in my own stories "may help inform research in understanding how…students of color experience educational institutions in order to acquire more specific knowledge of their academic successes and failures" (Chávez, 2012, p. 335). Chávez states that "as an auto-ethnographer, my role serves to unpack the repercussions on my educational identity" (Chávez, 2012, p. 335). Recognizing those influences and utilizing personal experience to affect an individual and a schools' ideology can help set the tone and environment necessary for student success (Roth, 2005). The ancient Greek maxim, know thyself, can be viewed as an educator's imperative to know "our backgrounds and…the critical incidents that have shaped our lives" (Shapiro and Stefkovitch, 2011, p. 180). As an educator, to know thyself is to be in tune with the visceral, core values from which we draw the decisions we make that affect our students. To that end, Shapiro and Stefkovitch (2011) state that they "have come to realize that life stories and personal experiences can be powerful" (p. 180), and that "such self-disclosures are needed to assist us in a better understanding of our pedagogical approaches and how we influence our students" (Shapiro and Stefkovitch, 2011, p. 180). It is through critical self-reflection that educators can come to know themselves and engage the utility of their own story to affect student outcomes; however, in so many, that power remains unfettered (Roth, 2005).

My autoethnography provided me with great insight into my life and the driving forces that guide my path as an educator. Now, through this article, the reader is invited into the world in which I lived and thrived, with hopes that the journey will provide impetus toward introspection of his own. Through critical self-reflection, I am hopeful that you, the reader, will come to "know thyself," and, as did I, introspectively gain a greater understanding of themselves, their students and their community.

To Serve the Public Good

It was only after taking several classes in my doctoral program that, through my own critical self-reflection, I realized that my parents very deliberately raised me to be an agent of change (Marzano, Waters and McNulty, 2005). From them I learned to navigate in a white world, adopting Gloria Anzaldúa's hybrid life (Anzaldua, Ortiz, Hernandez-Avila, & Perez, 2003). Because my parents' "optimism and ambition led them to a house many blocks from the Mexican…side of town" (Rodríguez, 1982, p. 10), I learned to successfully straddle living among the white townsfolk while retaining my brown culture, my Mexican heritage, and my Spanish language. I believed that my stories would produce "meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience" (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011, p. 274) which would inform and interest educational leaders. For this reason, I chose the autoethnographic form in order to "link[ing] personal experience to cultural context" and "generate a deeper understanding of what it means to serve the public good" (Gonzalez and Padilla, 2007, p. 149). My autoethnography focuses on my story and the manner in which my life experiences not only facilitated but actually prepared me for the important tasks I undertook as an educator and the many roles I have filled in the educational system, from student to teacher to administrator. As I critically reflected on my past as a vehicle to make sense of my present, I took "the reader on a reflective journey…and reflect[ed] on the critical incidents in our lives" (Shapiro and Stefkovitch, 2011, p. 177), hoping to "awaken educators to inequities in society and particularly in the schools" (Shapiro and Stefkovitch, 2011, p. 15).

My father's dream of "Mi Hija va ser Maestra" was purposefully orchestrated and brought to fruition. I believe that "serve[ing] the public good" (Gonzalez and Padilla, 2007 p. 149) as an educator was the cause which my parents deliberately and strategically fostered in me so many years ago when they paved the road for my success through their own activist efforts. During the 1960's and '70s, the decades during which Jim Crow laws prevailed in the small Central Texas town and the surrounding areas where I was raised (Foley, Mota, Post and Lozano, 1988; De Leon and Calvert, 2010; Montejano, 1987), my father in particular created a safe and progressive environment in which I flourished. My parents' advocacy for their children called on a strength and boldness of which, at the time, I was not aware. In the innocence of my youth and under the shelter of my father, I loved my childhood, my town, and my school. In my enlightened adulthood and with a more critical perspective, I reflect on the actions and events that are my experience, and I see the marginalization of a people and a disregard for their future.

In her book, The Autoethnographic I, Carolyn Ellis (2004) notes that "Sometimes the impetus for writing autoethnography…comes from a desire to remember and honor the past" (p. 111). This autoethnography is written with that intent. Much like author Richard Rodríguez, whose novel, Hunger of Memory, is written "for her and for him [his parents]—to honor them," I, too, write for that purpose (Dedication, 1982). However, remembering and honoring the past can also be the catalyst to impacting the future in significant and positive ways. I want my story to have legs. Guajardo and Guajardo (2010) state that "a story with legs is one that lives and moves" (pg. 95), one that "can help individuals and groups develop the necessary agency to push, resist, and amalgamate the outside forces to allow for the creation of a new reality for the self, the group, and the community in which we live" (p. 95).

School and Community Climate in the Early Years

My public school experience was in many ways colored by my own naïve, innocent and sheltered perspective—a perspective which I believe was developed as a result of my upbringing and the careful manner in which my parents oversaw my education. For this I am grateful, because through their intervention, I recollect enjoying an apparently successful, engaging and happy experience at school. At home, I was one of "those whose lives are bound by a barrio," embracing our language, culture and customs as the essence of our family life (Rodríguez, 1982, p. 14). Many years after having graduated from high school, I began to recognize so many of the educational inequities which had escaped me as an unsuspecting student. Minerva Chávez notes that as she "traveled the educational pipeline" her "educational stories [were] unavoidably… impacted by the hegemony of dominant educational practices" (Chávez, 2012, p. 335).

In like manner, relevant literature detailing hegemonic practices of administrators who made life altering decisions for the marginalized student populations in schools back in the 1960's and 70's indubitably affected my stories, and ultimately, twenty, thirty, forty years later, those of my students (Blanton, 2004; Foley, Mota, Post and Lozano, 1988; Montejano, 1987; San Miguel, 1987; Shockley, 1974). Through my research, I began to recognize the manner in which school and community functioned in their routine ways as I was growing up, subtly perpetuating the "two tiered economic and social structure" (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2010, p. 98) of the dominant Anglo society which marginalized the Mexican American populace in my hometown and the surrounding communities (Blanton, 2004; Foley, Mota, Post and Lozano, 1988; Montejano, 1987; San Miguel, 1987; Shockley, 1974). Through manipulation and sometimes deliberate oppression, many opportunities, benefits, and advantages were withheld from Mexican American students (Blanton, 2004; Foley, Mota, Post and Lozano, 1988; Montejano, 1987; San Miguel, 1987; Shockley, 1974). Common practices such as routine and autocratic scheduling of Mexican American boys in agriculture class while Anglo boys were scheduled into college bound classes "cultivated a dominant… narrative of power, a macro-story where the landowners and farmers wielded power, and manual workers followed their orders" (Foley, Mota, Post and Lozano, 1988; Guajardo and Guajardo, 2010, p. 99).

The practices described by Guajardo and Guajardo are substantiated by researchers who note that the oppressive educational practices advantageously served to create a social order that guaranteed a subjugated Mexican population that ensured a dependent and subservient workforce (Foley, Mota, Post and Lozano, 1988; Moll, 2010; Montejano, 1987; San Miguel, 1987; Shockley, 1974). In fact, during most of the twentieth century when I was growing up, "school officials regularly steered Tejanas away from studying academic subjects" in order to groom them for domestic, household work (Acosta and Winegarten, 2003, p. 150). This social construct was not unique to my hometown; in fact, it was prevalent in many of the Central and South Texas areas in which I grew up and in which I now work (Foley, Mota, Post and Lozano, 1988; Montejano, 1987). The stories in the autoethnography provide further illustration and "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) to substantiate these statements, with the hope that educators construct meaning and derive transferrable significance from this work.

The Introspective Narrative: Story as Data

I believe my story is one that has legs; that is, it is a story that can give agency to others and empower them to take action, initiate change, and make a positive difference in the lives of others (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2010). As professional educators, the anguish felt by our students is sometimes as painful to us as it is to them. The sentiment we feel for our kids, "that puzzling, powerful Mexican word, sentimiento" (Galarza, 2011, p. 195), is often overshadowed by the policies, rules and regulations that govern our school's daily operations. We don't often consult our own story to make a connection to theirs. The dataset used for the dissertation is composed of my personal stories detailing the relationship between my father and me, and the ultimate effect that relationship had on my development as an instructional leader. I privileged my personal narratives as the dissertation data set because they "join[…] story and traditional analysis" to reach "the inextricable connections between story and theory" (Ellis, 2004, p. 45). Bochner (2012) substantiates that concept by noting that "there [should] be a closer connection between our research texts and the lives they represent" (p. 157). To that end, the data consists of a collection of stories which interact with relevant literature while making meaningful connections to the reader—in essence, binding "the voice of theory" with "the voice of story" (Ellis, 2004, p. 56).

The stories which comprise the data utilize "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) in order to vividly and evocatively "demonstrate the lived experience and humanity…to outside audiences" (Ellis, 2004, p 38). I took license to lace my stories with literary conventions and devices which added texture, depth, and imagery to my work. The resulting "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) was intended to evoke emotion and make accessible organic, lived experiences which would hopefully elicit an evocative, sensory response in the reader (Bochner 2012; Ellis, 2004). Thus, the descriptive narratives utilized the autoethnographic construct as a vehicle to "produce[ing] meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience" (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011). The research data provided in the autoethnography was grounded in the personal experiences between father and daughter and the ultimate effect that relationship had on my work as an instructional leader.

Invitation to the Author's World: I Tell My Story

Truth rings like a school bell in the age-old maxim "Teachers make a difference." The question is, as educators, what kind of difference will we make? Aside from the pedagogy of our profession, in what ways have we prepared ourselves to make a difference in the lives of children? This document is an open door, and its readers "are invited into the author's world…to use what they learn there" (Ellis, 2004, p. 46). The objectives are to inform educational issues that still persist, to utilize these experiences as a construct for situational study, to personally practice the critical self-reflection demonstrated herein—the possibilities are many. There is "deep utility in story as a tool for change" (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2010, p. 93), but one has to be willing to utilize it. Therefore, so as "…to reach wider and more diverse mass audiences" with the ultimate goal of making "personal and social change possible for more people" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, p. 277) so that we truly do "make a difference," I tell my story…

La Casa de Piedra / The Rock House

Right in front of our small, pretty pink frame house in the heart of the barrio stood a giant, lofty cedar tree, planted by my grandfather on the very day that I was born. Next to that was the big silver butane tank, which a bright imagination could turn into anything from an alien spaceship to a gymnastics balance beam. In the corner, casting shade like a big umbrella over the tiny yard, was the enormous mesquite tree with the massive branches curving just right to form a little cradle close to the top—that's where I would climb and hide to read my books instead of washing dishes. I loved living in our little pink house in the barrio.

When my Papi decided to move our family out of the barrio and over to the "wrong side of the tracks," he did it quite abruptly (Rubel, 1966; San Miguel, 1987). Walking home from school one day, I arrived at an empty lot, my Mami's red and white roses stark against the bare ground where, that morning, the beautiful, small pink frame house had stood. I stared in disbelief, rooted to the ground, wondering what in the world might have happened, when my Papí pulled up in his red pick-up truck, honked the horn and called, "¡Vámonos, m'ijita! I moved the house!"

My father might have been a man of few words, but he was one who took quick action. Where others saw risk, my father saw opportunity. He always looked for the productive possibility, for the way in which he could turn a deficit into a positive. That vision was what led us to move to a deserted, overgrown and overlooked lot on the "white side" of town, where the proverbial railroad tracks were used to divide the races (Rubel, 1966; San Miguel, 1987). My Papi bought the lot, one side facing the neighborhood into which we moved, the other side prime frontage property right on Interstate Highway 90. The property was being used as a dumping spot, a perpetual eyesore with mounds of trash, overgrown with thorny cacti, weeds, mesquite trees and scraggly brush. With pick and shovel, an axe and a wheelbarrow, my father toiled for weeks in the hot summer sun and cleared the rubbish himself.

And then he waited…while the rest of us forgot. On that particular day, the opportunity had suddenly arisen; house movers had come by, and before I knew it, our beautiful little pink house had been unceremoniously plucked up from its little nest in the barrio and dropped down like a bombshell on the Anglo side of the tracks (Rubel, 1966; San Miguel, 1987). It didn't help that my dad decided to make the move at a time when racial turmoil was brewing in the political hotbed of nearby Crystal City and the surrounding areas (Foley, 2010; Montejano, 1987; Rubel, 1966; San Miguel, 1987; Shockley, 1974). I remember the Anglo neighbors standing at the fence line, Anzaldúa's (1987) "borderland" set up "to distinguish us from them" (p. 25). They stared in astonishment at our pink house as we drove up in my Papi's red pick-up truck. In truth, I was just as shocked as they were. My address had changed from one moment to the next.

The transition time was nil; suddenly, my neighbors literally sang a different song. Gone was the smell of Jovita's tortillas wafting across the way, no longer could I run across the unpaved dusty street to meet my cousins at my Grandpa's corner store, and the days of dancing in Tia Natalia's driveway after school lost the spontaneity that made them so much fun. However, regardless of where we were, "ours remained a Mexican family" (Galarza, 2011, p. 265). Our beautiful, small pink frame house was at our new location on Highway 90, but like the Barrio Boy, we retained the beauty of our Spanish language and the daily communication and contact with our familia (Galarza, 2011). My Mami and Papi taught us not only to respect and retain the traditions and customs of our people (Galarza, 2011), but to be the "mestiza" who is able to easily and "continually walk out of one culture and into another" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 99).

My father was a family man, "un hombre de familia," in every sense the Mexican patriarch who was nurturing, caring and protective, but who could also stop you in your tracks with a single look (Griswold del Castillo, 1984; Delgado Bernal, 2001). The strong, stern and silent side of my Papi commanded respect—"el respeto," a concept which we were taught at a very young age (Anaya, 1972; Griswold del Castillo, 1984). Without ever lifting a hand or raising his voice, my father got people's attention, so when my Papi said, "M'ijita, aqui vamos hacer nuestra casa de piedra," I never doubted or questioned that we would.

Having moved our small pink frame home across the tracks from the Mexican barrio to the Anglo neighborhood (Rubel, 1966; San Miguel, 1987), he began to build our dream home, the rock house he had told our Anglo neighbor he was going to build. My Papi himself built the home, with help from the compadres and other amigos upon whose handiwork my father relied. Initially, the walls of our rock house, like Robert Frost's (1988) "Mending Wall," seemed to be a tangible border in our new neighborhood, the place where "two or more cultures edge each other…it's not a comfortable territory to live in" (Anzaldúa, 2007, Preface). However, as the house began to take shape, the neighbors began to take interest.

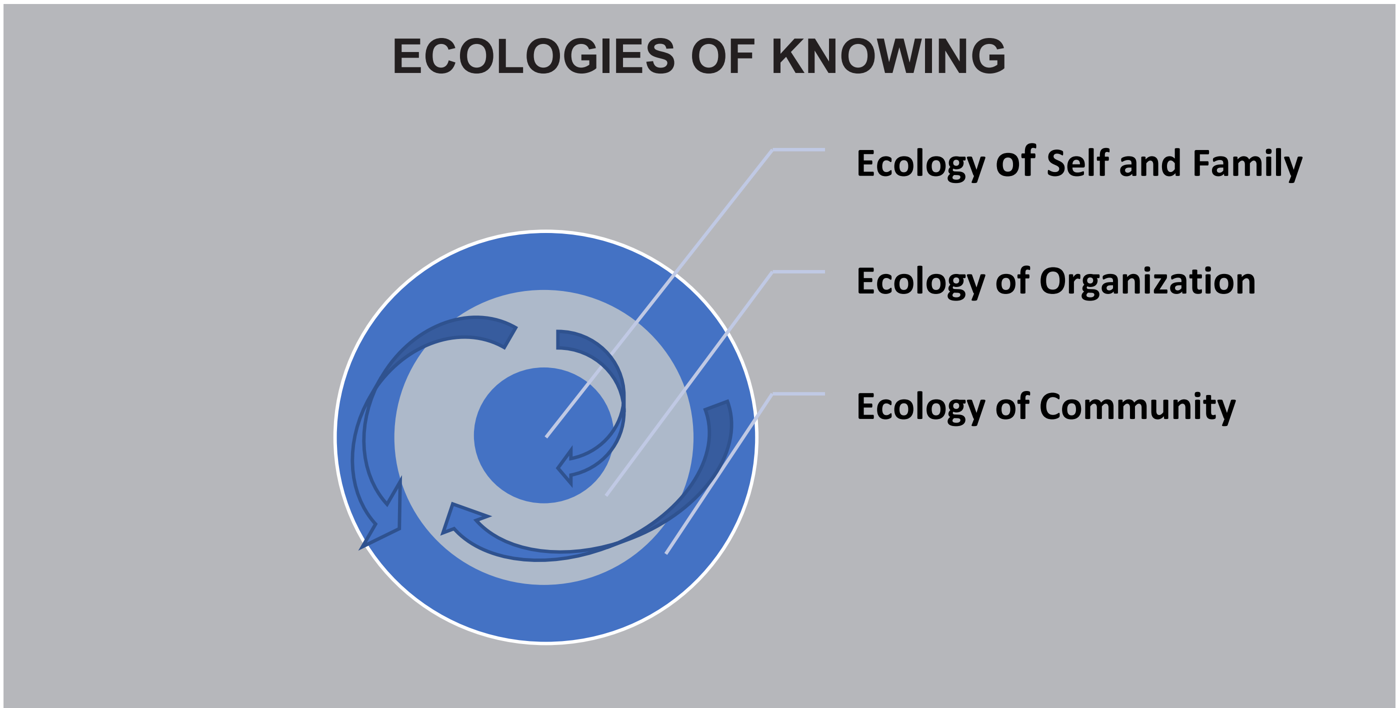
My Papi began by deconstructing our pink house while we still lived in it. Deliberately, one room at a time, one plank at a time, he loosened the lumber and inspected each board carefully until he had a heap of them ready to go. Then, like Dolores Delgado Bernal's (2001) metaphorical "trenza", my Papi interwove the wooden pink boards of our childhood home and the barrio life we brought with us, with the new lumber, the new sheetrock and signature red paint that he had bought at the local lumberyard (p. 135). Though the two houses existed separately, he meaningfully and deliberately utilized construction materials from both to build our new home. "Like the trenza"…Papi was able to "weave together our…identities" (Delgado Bernal, 2008, p. 135), moving us "towards a new consciousness…a new mestiza consciousness…a consciousness of the Borderlands" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 99) so that "we are often stronger and more complete" (Delgado Bernal, 2008, p. 135) in our final construction.

The pink boards of my childhood life fittingly became the anchor, the framework which provided a firm base and a strong foundation for our new rock house. I helped him haul the heavy stones; large, massive rocks, their creamy brown and white colors symbolically blended on the face of each stone. He and I heaved the rocks in place, "wearing our fingers rough with handling them" (Frost, 1988). He carefully examined each rock, turning it this way and that, until he found its niche in the wide expanse of stone wall. So it was that we built our rock house, La Casa de Piedra, which symbolized our new "hybrid" life (Anzaldua, Ortiz, Hernandez-Avila, & Perez, 2003).

"Mi hija va a ser maestra," he would say. Fifty years later, I thank my Papi for helping me find my niche, for nestling me snugly, carefully, like the stones of our rock house, into my place in life. Through his vision of my future as an accomplished professional Mexican American woman, coupled with my Mami's understanding of the "Latina holistic approach to life" (Delgado Bernal, 2008, p. 146), I now "stand and claim my space, making a new culture—una cultura mestiza—with my own lumber, my own bricks, and my own feminist architecture" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 44). La Casa de Piedra in which I was raised symbolizes my successful life as an Hispanic woman who bestrides both worlds, just like the brown and white colors which blend on the face of my rock house: each stands, synchronized, yet separate.

Story Analysis: The Ecologies of Knowing

The Ecologies of Knowing, an analytical framework designed to "organize our thinking and learning experiences from the micro to the meso and on to the macro levels" was utilized to "balance and navigate the learning" found in select literary pieces of the dissertation (Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Janson, C., and Militello, M., 2016, p. 27). A research based analytical model, The Ecologies "give appropriate and adequate data analysis depth and breadth" to examine the scope of a story (Ramirez, D., 2013, p. 68). The Ecologies—Self, Organization, and Community, are visually represented by a spiraling strand that interweaves them and our lived experiences in a "cohesive yet developmental complexity that is both simple and dynamic in its construction" (Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Jansen, and Militello, 2016, p. 28). The Ecologies of Knowing "are not isolated"; in fact, they "are bordered by permeable boundaries that leave room for exchange and interplay," spiraling and weaving in a dynamic and developmental process "as our experiences inform our schema" (Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Janson, C., and Militello, M., 2016, p. 27). The Ecologies of Knowing provides a contextual framework to derive meaning from lived experiences and uncover the manner in which people can be "in rhythm with their multiple ecologies," and collectively, can become "mediating entities" or a "mediating force" that can effect positive change (Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Jansen, and Militello, 2016, pp. 28-29). The Ecologies of Knowing will be used as an analytical framework to derive meaning from "La Casa de Piedra / The Rock House Story."



Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Janson, and Militello, Reframing Community Partnerships in Education: Uniting the Power of Place and Wisdom of People, 2016, p. 28.

“La Casa de Piedra / The Rock House Story”—Ecologies of Knowing Analysis

Gloria Anzaldúa calls it “la hoya”, the place [her body] where “All of life’s adventures go… where all fragments, inconsistencies, contradictions are stirred and cooked to a new integration” (Anzaldua, Ortiz, Hernandez-Avila, & Perez, 2003, p. 18). My *Ecology of Self*, central to this vignette, like Anzaldúa’s “hoya”, is an integration that I believe began years ago, in the painstaking construction of a humble rock house in Sabinal, Texas. In the late 60’s, “In Texas, Anglos Mexicans lived in separate worlds, Mexican Town and Anglo Town, with specific rules defining the proper place for Mexicans” (Calderon & Lopez-Morin, 2000). Sabinal was no different. My Ecology of Self and Family, as together our family learned to negotiate both the construction of the home as well as the integration of a neighborhood, took me to the dynamic “third space,” the “balance or tension between the “I” and the “we” in the Ecology of Self that facilitates the ability to “make decisions in the best interest of the self and the organization” (Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Jansen, and Militello, 2016, p. 28). The experiences surrounding me, as referenced in the “Rock House Story,” included dialogue and interactions with others regarding our family’s sudden move to our new neighborhood, “conversations and experiences that are made personal and relevant at the most micro of levels” (Ramirez, D., 2013, p. 53). They called for an understanding of the importance of relationships and the development of a collective sense, a mentality that would recognize the importance of others around me, the cousins and friends from the barrio as well as my new Anglo neighbors across the street. As noted in the vignette, the irony of the brown and white blends that color the rock is not lost as I look back at the significance of my father’s construction of the Mexican home on the Anglo side of the tracks (Montejano, 1987; Rubel, 1966). The spiraling, dynamic nature of the Ecologies of Knowing illustrates how an engaging and reciprocal relationship between the micro and the macro ecologies can create “an empowering dialogue that communicates and makes known our abilities to bring about change in our communities…if we act collectively with one another” (Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Janson, C., and Militello, M., 2016, p. 29). I believe that my father’s relationships established the type of dynamic that spanned the Ecologies and brought change to our community.

My father intertwined the Ecologies of Self and Community, “shift[ing]…from an external and immutable constraint to a web of interwoven relationships that can…become more nurturing and just” (Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Janson, C., and Militello, M., 2016, p. 29). This idea of intertwined ecologies is illustrated in the vignette through the interweaving of the pink “barrio house” boards with the new boards that signified our new life in the neighborhood. Metaphorically, the interwoven boards in my life resulted in my ability to “straddle[d] cultures, races, languages…,” transcending the hegemonic barriers in the ecologies of my life (Delgado Bernal, 2001). Thus, I learned I could live in any world I chose to live in—my quick and easy friendship with Jane across the street as well as Irene across the tracks illustrates my transience between ecological spaces, yet it also speaks to that “Chicana consciousness” that Delgado Bernal (2001) recognizes as “living with ambivalence while balancing opposing powers (p. 626).”

And opposing powers there were—from the white next-door neighbor, referenced in the vignette, who commented, eyeing our beautiful, small pink house when it was first moved into the neighborhood, “Is that the rock house you were gonna build, Rudy?” to other skeptics who wondered what in the world we were thinking, moving across the tracks and into the white neighborhood (Rubel, 1066; San Miguel, 1987). The lived experiences of the micro ecology spiraled and intertwined with the macro ecology as I experienced the subtle yet cynical attitude of a people who questioned my Mami and Papi’s motives for moving their family into uncharted territory, into Gloria Anzaldúa’s (2007) Borderlands, La Frontera, an Ecology of Community where “people of different races occupy the same territory…where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (Preface). As I now reflect on those memorable days, I imagine that perhaps Mom and Dad knew, in their own way, that there would be a few rough and jagged edges in the youthful experiences they destined for me in moving us to our new home, in an ecological space that was to challenge our comfort zone in different ways. From my younger childhood as I grew up playing in the front yard of the pink house in the Sabinal barrio to my adolescent years living in the rock house on the edge of busy Highway 90, I learned to embrace a "new tribalism," "a more inclusive identity that's based on many features and not solely on race," my Ecology of Self that "adds to, but does not dispossess… [my] own history, culture, or home-ethnic identity" (Anzaldua, Ortiz, Hernandez-Avila, & Perez, 2003).

Like the blending of the creamy brown and white swirls distinctly embedded in the stones of my rock house, my father and mother ensured through my upbringing that I would lead Gloria Anzaldúa's "hybrid life" (Anzaldua, Ortiz, Hernandez-Avila, & Perez, 2003), a brown Hispana in a white world. I learned to weave the ecologies and transcend their boundaries, living in a world in which I could relate to others, regardless of race, still understanding and maintaining, just like my Mami' taught me, my Ecology of Self—my cultural "commitment to family…and [my] desire to give back and help others" (Delgado Bernal, 2001). Now, living in the Rio Grande Valley on the Texas, United States / Mexican border, reflecting on my "Rock House Story," I realize: "I am a border woman"; I have straddled borders all my life (Anzaldúa, 2007, Preface; Delgado Bernal, 2001). "The Rock House Story" narrates lived experiences which provided "compensations... and certain joys," and an "exhilaration in being a participant in the… evolution" (Anzaldúa, 2007, Preface) as I learned to successfully "negotiate the ecologies in a seamless way" (Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., Janson, C., and Militello, M., 2016, p. 29) and later navigate in the fast-paced professional and demanding role that was my parents' dream for me: "Mi Hija va ser Maestra."

The Holly Story

> *"Listen to me—the best thing we can do for her is to convene an ARD and excuse her from the TAAS test; otherwise, that kid will never graduate." The counselor's words rang in my ears as I sat facing Holly. After the countless hours she and I spent working on her writing skills, I wanted the best for my student. Perhaps they were right; for her, an attendance certificate might be just as good as a diploma. Her lower lip quivering, Holly raised her tear-stained face toward me. Her poignant plea was heartbreaking. "But Miss," she sobbed, "I want to graduate just like everybody else. I want a real diploma."*

I sometimes wonder what Holly's future would have been like had she not passed the state-mandated TAAS test (Texas Education Agency). Labeled both an Economically Disadvantaged and a Special Education student, she decided to take the exam and graduate with a regular diploma, despite her counselor's advice to "take the exemption" allowed for her based on her demographics. A senior with all the credits necessary to graduate, all Holly needed was to pass the TAAS, and she was determined she was going to do it. As her English teacher, I knew how tough it was going to be. That year, she and I spent countless hours during class, before and after school, and even during our lunch periods preparing for the test. She struggled with the material, often crying in frustration and despair, but she and I never gave up. The day she received her passing scores, we both cried, and I knew I was exactly where I needed to be.

I remember vividly telling my daddy about Holly, my excitement spilling over with the pride and joy of her upcoming graduation. I detailed her struggles and the demands of the exam she had finally been able to pass. I remember well my father's response to me. It was not, as I had expected, laced with praise and commendation for what I had done; it was full of question and wonder about what Holly was now going to do—after all, "Va a graduar; pos, que vaya al colegio". My Papi had never met Holly, but his words ring in my ears to this day. I was Holly's teacher, happy in the vision of her high school graduation; my father was her advocate, staunch in the vision of greater possibilities for my beloved student. I traveled back to Edinburg that day with a different perspective, a new vision, and a greater understanding of how much I did not learn in my preparation for my profession.

I lost track of Holly in the ensuing years; the last I knew, she had married and, having graduated from a local community college, worked in one of the hospitals as a nurse's aide. Holly was one of my star students, yet I think I learned more from her than she did from me. I learned the importance of the human spirit; I learned the strength of personal conviction, and I learned that my father's response to Holly's story was the affirmation of his hopes for me—now, it was my turn to pass it forward—to build pride, ambition and hope in others, as it was done for me.

Story Analysis—Plática

Plática is an art. It is an engaging, dynamic, interactive tool that serves several purposes. A structured analysis of the "power of plática" will provide an insight to the collaborative, engaging and interdependent communicative mode which was the major form of dialogue practiced in our home and that of many other families of Mexican descent (Guajardo, F., and Guajardo, M., 2013, p. 159). A "cultural form…akin to a nuanced multi-dimensional conversation," the art of plática is most powerful when it is purposely developed; it can emerge as a form of inquiry, it can be pedagogical in nature, or it can be utilized as a conduit for community building and development (Guajardo, F., and Guajardo, M., 2013, pp. 161-163). The robust, animated nature of plática gives its participants agency to transcend and weave among all three of these while the ongoing, engaging activities of "listening, inquiry, storytelling, and story making," intermingle to give plática its unique and flavorful form. The Holly Story illustrates the "power of plática" and its ultimate value and impact as a communicative tool.

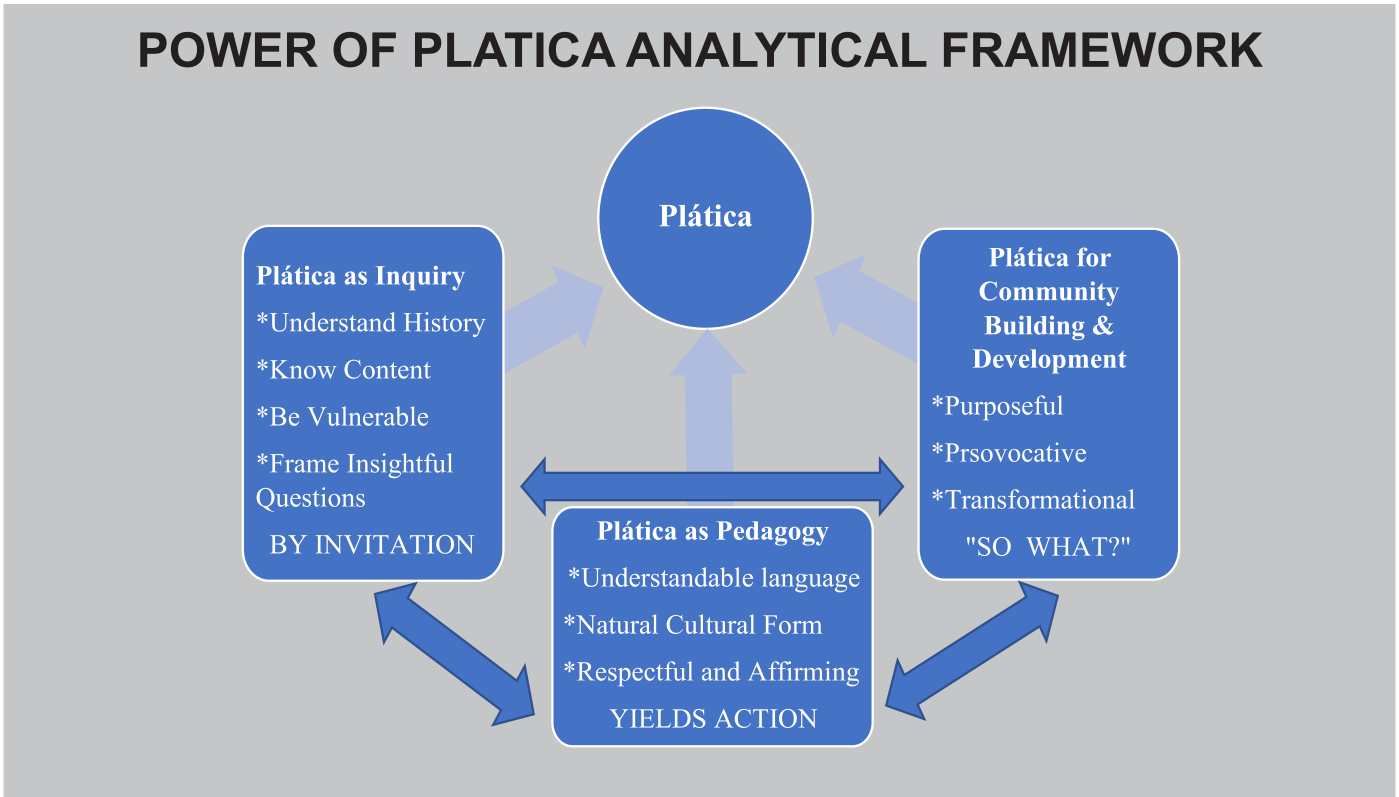

POWER OF PLATICA ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK
Plática
Plática as Inquiry
*Understand History
*Know Content
*Be Vulnerable
*Frame Insightful Questions
BY INVITATION
Plática for Community Building & Development
*Purposeful
*Prsovocative
*Transformational
"SO WHAT?"
Plática as Pedagogy
*Understandable language
*Natural Cultural Form
*Respectful and Affirming
YIELDS ACTION

Illustration adapted from Guajardo, M. and Guajardo, F. (2013). The Power of Platicá. Reflections. 13(1), 159-164.

"Mi Hija es Maestra—The Holly Story": Story Analysis

In The Holly Story, the introductory vignette sets the stage, describing the heartbreaking plea of a young girl whose ambition is to pass the state mandated TAAS test, despite the fact that her high school counselor recommended that she be exempted from the exam based on her Special Education status. The introductory vignette is expanded as a longer and more detailed story, with vital components that add depth and perspective to the narrative. The basic elements of plática, including "listening, inquiry, storytelling, and story making" are critical components as the story unfolds, and the "personal, relational, provocative, and dynamic" nature of plática (Guajardo, F., and Guajardo, M., 2013, p. 160) is clear as my father was "full of question and wonder" during the course of the dialogue. Guajardo and Guajardo (2013) state that plática compels one to "pay attention to the story…to the environment surrounding the story…and to context" (p. 160). My Papi paid attention to the story and all its details, gaining new knowledge regarding standardized testing, special education accommodations, ramifications of the accountability system, and the impact of state mandated testing on our students and their future. At this point in the story, the Pedagogical nature of plática is apparent in my Papi's new-found knowledge. In fact, "plática spaces are co-constructions, where conditions are manifest as collaborative and interdependent," and my father understood Holly's lesson much better than I.

Having shared with him the joy over Holly's eventual passing of the exam and pending high school graduation, his pensive response "was not, as I had expected, laced with praise and commendation." The tools of plática which my Papi had honed over the years, "how to think critically, how to ask the right question, or how to find the logic in an argument," (Guajardo, F., and Guajardo, M., 2013, p. 160) were not taught in the short six years he attended school; they were learned through plática, "en la universidad de la vida" (Guajardo, F., and Guajardo, M., 2013, p. 160), and his lived experience obligated him to ask me one important question.

His "[well] framed insightful question" gave agency to plática's "powerful tool for a relational inquiry process" (Guajardo, F., and Guajardo, M., 2013, p. 162) as he asked, "¿Y ahora que?" And, now, what? "Va a graduar; pos que vaya al colegio." Plática as Inquiry, in his simple question, "emerge[d] as a new knowledge that informs the work we do" (Guajardo, F., and Guajardo, M., 2013, p. 162). My father's profound statement, a vision way beyond my narrow focus on test scores, turned the Pedagogical tide and taught me a lesson I'll never forget. I realized that "I was Holly's teacher," happy that she had passed her test and was graduating, but, although he had never met Holly, "my father was her advocate, staunch in the vision of greater possibilities for my beloved student." In "The Holly Story," my father's observations and commentary became the Pedagogical Plática that gave me, as I state in the story, "a different perspective, a new vision, and a greater understanding of how much I did not learn in my preparation for my profession."

Final Narrative--Closing Ode: Una Plática con mi Papi

The final narrative shared in this article gives artistic license to the cultural communicative form, plática (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2013). Plática, is utilized as a dynamic tool expressed in the creative format of a dedicated poem, an ode, which, through direct address, gave agency to a heart-felt and revealing dialogue with my father. The Plática con mi Papi was used as a construct to weave Delgado Bernal's (2008) metaphorical trenza of "personal, professional, and communal identities," (p. 147) into a "mujerista sensibility" that embodies the "Latina holistic approach to life…based on collectivity, wholeness, reciprocity, and transformation" (p. 146). Foundational to the Ode are salient references to Gloria Anzaldúa's hybrid life (Anzaldua, Ortiz, Hernandez-Avila, & Perez, 2003), and other apt descriptions of the childhood I led as detailed in the organic data presented in the dissertation. Just as Richard Rodríguez (1982) used his classic novel, Hunger of Memory, "to consider the boy [he] once was…to describe the man [he is] now" (p. 5), so I gave agency to the Ode to my Papi to consider the impact that my childhood and my parents had on me and my development as an educator. The Ode, in the spirit of plática, is an open door, an extended story, a personal outpouring of the heart, and its readers "are invited into the author's world…" (Ellis, 2004, p. 46) to dialogue with the stories recounted there, to make meaning of the traditional, cultural, and historical factors which my father mitigated for me, and which ultimately strengthened me as an instructional leader.

Introduction to Plática con mi Papi

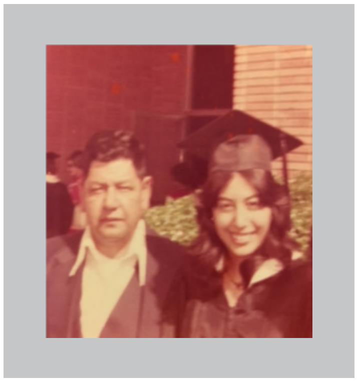
The day my father left me, December 28, 2008, it seemed that time stood still. "My father was not supposed to die…I can still see him in my mind," sitting across the kitchen table, eating breakfast and planning for the day (Gonzalez, K., 2008, p. 125). Ten years later, his sweater still hangs in the kitchen where he left it; his hat is still right by the front door where he hung it. The date on the Virgen de San Juan calendar will perpetually be December, 2008, because even now, as I run my hand along the rough edges of the rock house he so painstakingly built, time stands still, and his spirit still lives.

When I reflect on my Papi's story, I realize it "is one that lives and moves" and has the power to impact others in a positive way (Guajardo, M. and Guajardo, F., 2010, p. 95).

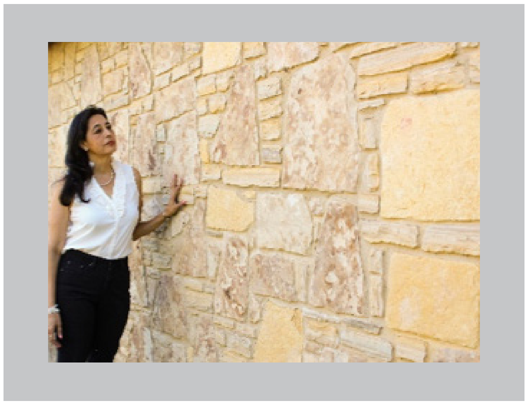
Plática con mi Papi is not his story or mine; it is a "story that speaks to [readers] about their experiences or about the lives of others they know" (Ellis, 2004, p. 195). The ode is a story that speaks to every educator in the profession: a story of strength, ambition, expectation, and ethics. The Plática con mi Papi is not a story of the past, but a story for the future, for my future, and for the future of the many lives around me whom I touch.

My heart shattered when I lost my Papi; he was gone before I was able to say one last goodbye. He passed on, and I was thousands of miles away…how I wish I would have been by his side. So often I wish I could talk to him just one more time. So often I wonder just what I would tell him if I could have one last plática with my Papi…

A Closing Ode: Una Plática con mi Papi



"Mi hija va a ser maestra," así lo dijiste
Assuredly, believingly, confidently, knowingly,
You said it to all:
"My daughter will be a Teacher,"
A father's dream, your quest for my success.
Yo creo que nunca te dí las gracías—did I ever say a proper thank you?
Gracías, mí Papi, for all that you did to make my life successful… for believing in me, and for giving me a vision of whom I could become.
I reflect on my past, my happy childhood, and on me, myself in particular.
Papi, there is nothing singularly striking about me that one might say signaled success, yet somehow, you and Mami taught this too-tall, too-skinny, gawky little girl of yours to believe in herself.
You made me feel special, and loved, and capable,
you not only gave me license, you gave me an obligation, an imperative,
to succeed in an environment that might have otherwise worked against it.
Y*o creo que nunca te dí las gracías, thank you, mi Papi.*
Como Casa de Piedra, Sheltering, defending, protecting, providing,
The strength of your presence my stronghold, my shield.
Paving and pushing my path to unmapped places and spaces,
Straddling cultures to champion my cause.
Remember when we built our rock house, Papi? La Casa de Piedra…
Tu, Mami y yo…living in sections of the pink house as we tore it down to clean the boards and weave them in with the new ones, so we knew we would always live in our pink house too. I remember platicándo as you chipped and molded each stone, and I helped you put each rock in its own place as we formed the walls of our rock house… "Every rock has its place," you said, "cada Piedra tiene su lugar."
Fuíste mi Piedra
Living the borderlands, you knew what to do:
Rough, rugged and sharp, or silent, solid and true,
You were my rock, my pillar of strength.
Strong, steady, stable and staunch, I knew all would be right if I was with you.
You were my Rock, mi Piedra, mi Papi.



Maybe because you were my Papi, and I was your "consentida,"
your little girl, but somehow I felt that no matter the situation,
you would make everything all right, no matter what.
Remember when there was nothing that Mami could find to feed our family?
Money sometimes was sparse, but I never knew!
All I knew was that suddenly you would step into the kitchen with a flourish and a flair,
becoming the chef of the hour, with your special "bomboline" recipe —Where did you get that name??—With whatever provisions you found, you somehow put a meal on our table, delicious and special, because you made it so. Never realizing
all the hardships you and my Mami went through, we ate like kings,
our "Bomboline Stew."

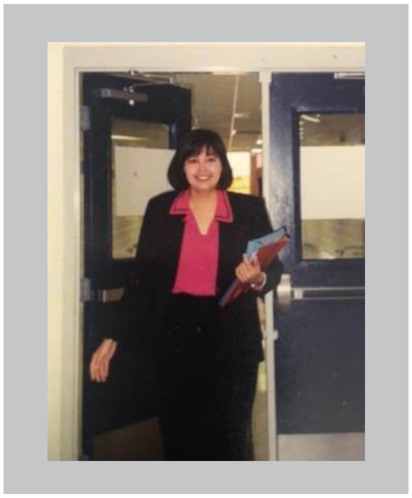
Entre La Hoya todo obstáculo cayó,
The inequality, the injustice, the prejudice, the power
All shards and fragments of life unfair, into the oya they flew
You faced and embraced a new integration
Living the Hybrid Life, you worked your way through.

How did you do it? I never realized the courage you had in ensuring we were given our rightful due. I remember when they assigned Mami to serve plates and clean dishes in the kitchen at the fireman's barbeque—she was the only Mexican American there. You walked in there and brought her out of the kitchen to the front, to handle the money as people paid for their plates. No one was more qualified than she, you said, because she's been handling money at our store for years. I was there that day. No one questioned you, and no one ever put Virginia in the kitchen again.

Juntos tejieron la trenza,
Papi the ambition, the resilience, the drive
Mami the compassion, the kindness, the heart
Weaving together the traits of the two,
I stand in nepantla—Mexican American Mujerista,
Your legacy true.

¡Mami! Bella Roca! How we've missed her, all of us, since she passed on. She was your rock; she stood by your side, every venture you took. I think I'm a lot like her; I do. She managed the store and took care of the business as well as taking care of all of us, and she still had time to make our birthday cakes, fix our Cream of Wheat atole every morning, and make sure my brothers and I always went to school with our clothes nicely starched and ironed. She was a Mujerista, taking care of it all, as I think I am now, weaving together the intellectual, spiritual, and familial sensibilities into the holistic Latina approach to life. From you, mi Papi, I learned to negotiate and navigate among any and all. I gained the *conocimiento* needed to know that awareness isn't enough—it takes action to truly benefit the public good. From you I learned the value of hard work. I learned to never leave anything unfinished. From you, I inherited that passion, that drive, that burning ambition that springs from the soul, saying, "*¿Y ahora, que?" and "Now, what? What's next?*"

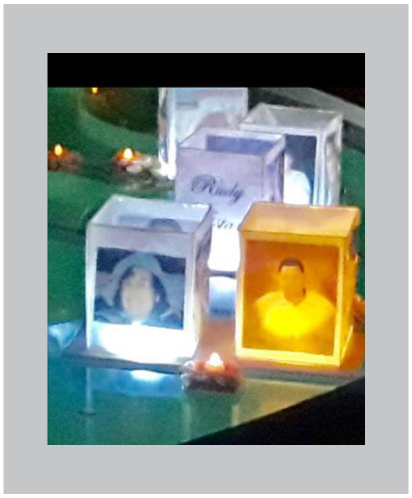
"Mi hija va a ser maestra," así lo dijiste
Assuredly, believingly, confidently, knowingly,



Locked in my memory
“Mi hija va a ser maestra”
A father’s dream became a daughter’s legacy.

> To be a teacher, el ser Maestra…a dream come true, for both of us, Papi. My career success came from a seed you planted many years ago, my loving father, a seed you nurtured and nourished throughout my life. I often wish that you and Mami could have lived to see me now, as I’ve advanced in my profession. I love my job, Papi, and I hope that you and Mami somehow know, can somehow see, that the dream for which we worked came true in such a wonderful way for me.

Sientate. Vamos a platicár.
Your coffee cup is waiting, pan dulce on the kitchen table.
Andale, mi Papi…Vamos a platicár…
You continue moving, inspiring, caring and loving,
Mami and Papi, still watching over me, still speaking to me softly, alive in my heart.
Anoche senti tu presencia; anoche bailaron bajo la luna…
I know your presence is still here,
platicándo con nosotros in your own way.
Last night, at JoAnna’s wedding, we lowered paper lanterns with pictures of departed loved ones on them into the calm waters of a moonlit pool,
her beautiful way of sharing her special day with you.
As my brother and I each set,
first your lantern and then Mami’s,
gently into the water, you floated lightly amongst the others,
and somehow, under the starlit sky, you found your way to my Mami’s side,
and, as if enchantment ruled the night, in the stillness of the water,
you twirled together, like paper lanterns, dancing in the moonlight;
Mami and Papi, I heard you, speaking to us so softly, your pláticas of love.



Author’s Note: The creative piece above, titled *“Una Platica con mi Papi*” requires rhythm, flow and imagination. Literary and other references in the “Ode” are either referenced earlier in the article or are a part of the public domain.

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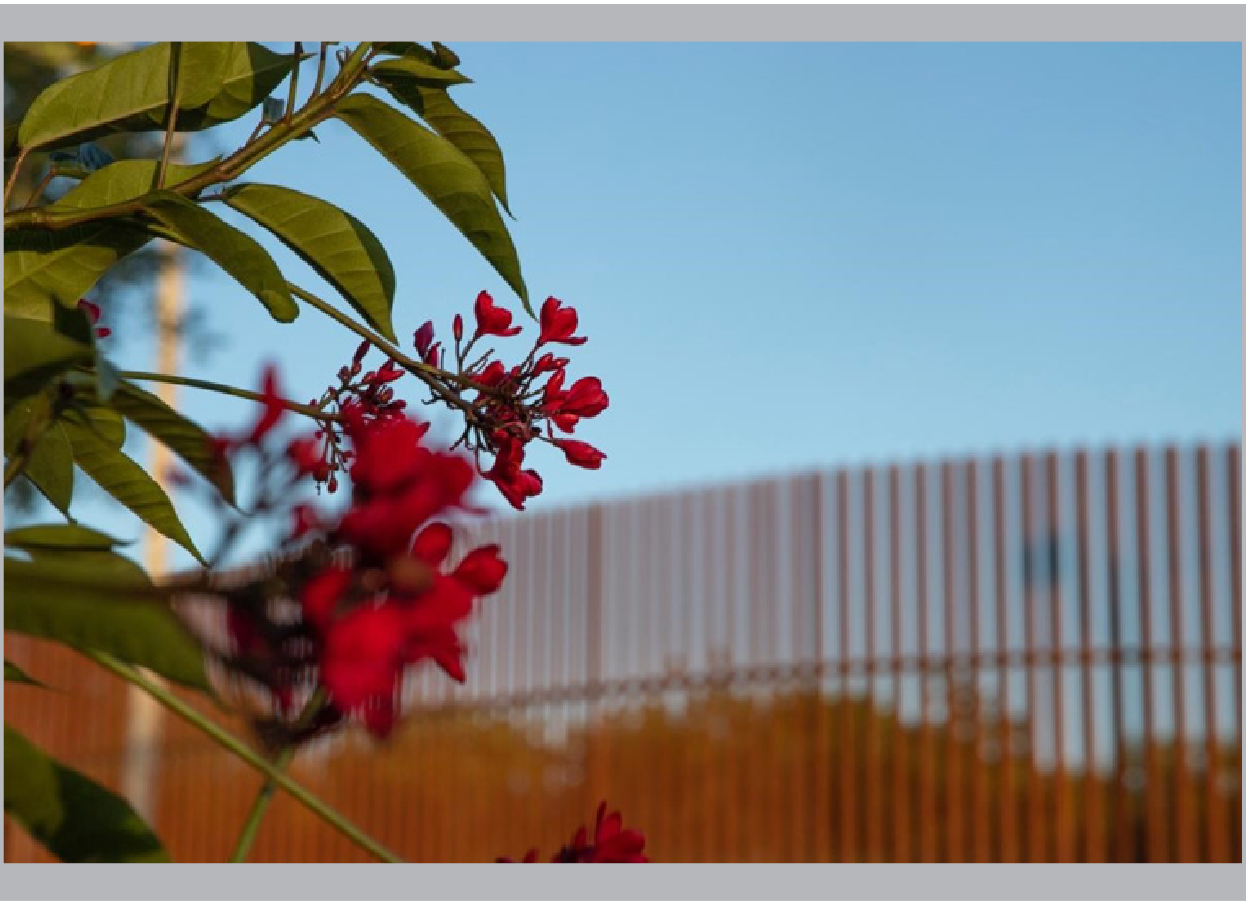
Old Hidalgo Pumphouse Museum and World Birding Center, Hidalgo, Tx.



Photographed by Arnulfo Daniel Segovia

Diversidad de nopales, sus flores y frutos.

¿Cómo nos une el nopal a los hispanos que vivimos en el Valle del Río Grande de Texas?

Teresa Feria Arroyo

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"Le falta un grado para ser carne" solía decir mi papá cuando estábamos comiendo nopal. Innumerables los platillos que mis abuelas cocinaban con él. Tradición culinaria y medicinal que data de tiempos prehispánicos y que aún se pasa de generación en generación en la cultura mexicana. Con sus grandiosas adaptaciones ecológicas, propiedades medicinales, sabores y colores, el nopal es más que una planta—representa tradiciones, cultura, religión, y en una sola palabra, a toda una nación, pues es uno de los símbolos más importantes en México: ¡se encuentra al centro de nuestra bandera nacional! Tan fuerte es la influencia del nopal en la cultura mexicana, que en cualquier lugar geográfico en donde haya un mexicano, habrá una historia que contar acerca del nopal.

El nopal y todo lo que esta planta representa es un tema que me apasiona como bióloga, pero sobre todo como hispana mexicana. Porque conocer las bondades del nopal trae beneficios tanto para el ambiente como para la salud, pero además culturales, de aceptación por las raíces indígenas, hispanas, mexicanas. Creo profundamente, que sentirse exitoso, ¡porque el éxito se siente!, está relacionado con conocer y aceptar nuestros orígenes.

No todos los mexicanos, o descendientes de ellos, tienen que amar el nopal, pero sí conocer que es parte de la cultura que vio nacer a nuestros ancestros. Yo, recuerdo las innumerables tardes platicando y deleitándome con los platillos de mi abuelita Magos en la Ciudad de México. Una indígena muy humilde de la sierra Mixteca de Oaxaca, que fue huérfana desde los ocho años, pero que fue capaz de lograr que sus cinco hijos varones tuvieran profesiones honradas. Sus hijos, crecieron con frijoles, tortillas, nopales, y salsa, la más picosa, la mejor. Mis abuelas, sus historias, y sus platillos son el sabor de México, de mi identidad como persona, como madre, como mujer, y como profesional.

Esa misma identidad es la que quiero pasarles a mis hijas, que ya desde ahora degustan el nopal, conocen sus propiedades y las historias familiares. En cada visita a mi tierra mexicana siempre hay alguien comiendo o contando una historia sobre el nopal. Mi mamá, mis hermanos, tías, primas y cuñadas, por ejemplo, están pasando esas tradiciones a sus hijos. Por esto, nosotros aprendemos a respetar esas raíces que nos hacen tan fuertes, y ese amor que tenemos a la tierra, a la comida, a la familia.

Rita Ramírez y Jesús Arroyo (de Veracruz, padres de mi papá), Teresa Arroyo (mi mamá), Rogelio Feria (mi papá), y Margarita Ortíz (indígena Mixteca de Oaxaca, mamá de mi papá). Veracruz, México, 1971.

Un poco de historia

En tiempos prehispánicos, al nopal se le conocía como nochtli o nopalli, termino náhuatl (Guzmán-Lechuga y Valdéz–Borroel, 2016, Chávez-Moreno et al, 2009). Se les conoce como nopales a las especies de los géneros Opuntia y Nopalea. Existen aproximadamente 200 especies de Opuntia, de las cuales, al menos 114 se distribuyen en México (aunque estos números pueden cambiar dependiendo del autor que se consulte), que es el principal productor del nopal y de su fruto, la tuna. Más de 50 especies del género Opuntia se usan como alimento, forraje o medicina (Chavez-Moreno et al, 2009).

La mayoría de las especies de Opuntia son comestibles, pero dos especies son las que más se cultivan: Opuntia ficus-indica y Opuntia joconoxtle. La primera especie O. ficus-indica recibió varios nombres conforme fue transportada o naturalizada en otros países y su consumo data de hace unos 9,000 años (Kiesling, 1998). Esta especie es cultivada en América, África, Asia, Europa y Oceanía. Se le puede encontrar desde Canadá hasta la Patagonia y desde el nivel del mar hasta los 5100 m sobre el nivel del mar en Perú (Inglese et al, 2017).

Durante la época de la colonización, los españoles llamaron al nopal Higo de las Indias, porque, en aquel tiempo, se creyó que se habían descubierto las "Nuevas Indias". También se le llamo Tuna de Castilla o Nopal de Castilla. EL nopal rebasó los límites de América, cuando los moros llevaron esta especie a África y la llamaron Higo de Cristianos. Actualmente se le conoce como Tapia en Marruecos. En Israel se le conoce como Sabra y en California como Mission cactus, ya que fue llevado a este lugar por los misioneros Franciscanos en 1789. En Brasil se le conoce como Palma forrageira, ya que se le utiliza principalmente para forraje (Kiesling, 1998), en Estados Unidos (EU), se le llama Prickly pear. Independientemente del nombre que se le dé, Opuntia ficus-indica es una de las cactáceas de mayor importancia agronómica por sus frutos o sus tallos que sirven de forraje o que son consumidos como verdura. El nopal tiene usos múltiples, se puede consumir en guisos, sopas, jugos, ensaladas, pan, postres, tortillas, miel, pastillas, entre otras (Caiminagua y Andrés, 2018).

El nopal en el Valle del Río Grande

Llegue al Valle del Río Grande en el 2008 a ocupar una posición como profesora asistente en la Universidad de Texas Pan-Americana, una de las universidades fundadoras de la Universidad de Texas Río Grande Valley

(UTRGV). A mi llegada, tenía mucha ilusión de poder hacer estudios de ecología con el nopal, sus propiedades alimentarias y sus amenazas (plagas y cambio climático). Algunos de mis estudiantes se unieron a esta idea y juntos realizamos varios estudios que se presentaron en diversas conferencias científicas. Nos unía en ese momento la pasión por un tema relevante para la investigación, aunque faltaba algo. Para mi algo muy importante, era saber porque estos estudiantes se querían unir a un proyecto de investigación referente al nopal y no a otros que yo dirijo, como por ejemplo el del estudio de la ecológica de aves. Todos los estudiantes que han formado parte de la investigación con el nopal tienen una característica en común: ya conocían el nopal, lo comían, sabían de sus propiedades medicinales, de sus múltiples usos, o tenían familiares que lo cultivaba. Esta información cultural tan importante se pasa de generación a generación a través de la familia.

Mis hijas Victoria y Rebecca. Celebrando el cumpleaños de Rebecca. Chimalhuacán Estado de México. Julio de 2016.

Sin embargo, varios de mis estudiantes, pese a parecerse tanto a mí en el color de la piel, o el tipo de cabello, que fue heredado de nuestros ancestros mexicanos, no sabían nada sobre el nopal. Algunos de ellos entienden español, pero no lo hablan, otros, usan una mezcla (spanglish) de los dos idiomas al mismo tiempo, algunos ni lo entienden ni lo hablan. Este descubrimiento me intrigó, sobre todo porque además de tener apellidos hispanos, ¡la frontera que une al Valle del Río Grande de Texas y Tamaulipas, México, es de sólo unos kilómetros! Dos eventos me ayudaron a entender esta situación. En el año 2015 tuve la suerte de conocer al Dr. Francisco Guajardo, director del Instituto B3 (Bilingüe, Bicultural, and literario) de la UTRGV, experto, entre otras cosas, en trabajos de apoyo a las comunidades locales. En ese entonces mi esposo y yo teníamos la idea de fundar una organización no lucrativa para motivar a los jóvenes a que se interesaran en el estudio de las aves. Me recomendaron buscar al Dr. Guajardo para que él me aconsejara sobre este tipo de organizaciones, ya que él es el fundador del Centro Llano Grande. Esta organización no lucrativa apoya a estudiantes de las comunidades semirrurales para que sigan adelante con sus estudios universitarios. Mi primera entrevista con el Dr. Guajardo fue exitosa, tanto, que me invito a formar parte de un grupo de consejeros educativos del Teton Science Schools, a nivel nacional. Este grupo promueve la educación en la cultura, paisajes, oportunidades y experiencias locales. El Dr. Guajardo, Francisco, es una persona genuina, brillante, con un amor por la cultura mexicoamericana que yo no conocía. ¡Eso, yo no conocía la cultura mexicoamericana! La conocí a través de él y de los grandes amigos de la escuela de estudios mexicoamericanos en UTRGV, con quienes asistí a un entrenamiento profesional en México, en Julio del 2017. Entendí entonces, porque algunas personas de origen hispano, mexicano, no hablaban español. Descubrí entonces el legado de Gloria Anzaldúa. Descubrí que hubo, o quizás aún existe, para algunos mexicoamericanos, una presión muy fuerte por sólo hablar el idioma del país que los vio nacer, en este caso el inglés de Estados Unidos. Por otro lado, algunos, habían optado por crear su propio lenguaje: el spanglish.

El segundo evento, está relacionado con mis propias hijas. Rebecca nació en el 2009 en McAllen, Texas. Victoria nació en Harlingen, Texas en el 2015. Rebeca, con sus nueve años, habla y entiende muy bien el español desde que tenía dos años. Victoria, con sus cuatro años, entiende perfectamente el español, pero no lo habla, al menos no como yo quisiera. Pero las dos, Rebecca y Victoria ¡hablan el spanglish! Conocer sobre la cultura mesoamericana a través de Francisco y otros colegas de UTRGV, así como vivir en carne propia las experiencias con mis hijas, me ayudó a entender lo que pasa con el lenguaje en el Valle del Rio Grande, pero ¿Qué hay del conocimiento del nopal y sus propiedades? ¿Qué paso con este legado? Yo como buena mexicana, que hacía honores a mi bandera nacional todas las mañanas en la escuela primaria y secundaria, conozco el valor histórico del nopal en nuestra cultura y como hija de familia que consume nopal todos los semas del año, conozco bien sus propiedades nutritivas y medicinales. Sin embargo, como profesora de mi universidad en el Valle del Rio Grande, desconocía que había hispanos que no conocían el nopal, que no lo habían comido, que no reconocían la importancia de éste como un símbolo nacional mexicano.

En una cena familiar, con mi esposo y mis hijas, platiqué de la importancia del nopal para mi "una mexicana". La reacción inmediata de mi hija mayor, Rebecca, fue aclarar que el nopal no sólo pertenece a México "Mamá, yo como nopal y tenemos nopal en el backyard…el nopal no es sólo de México". Aquí la prueba de que mis hijas se identifican como mexicoamericanas por que el nopal forma parte de su tradición, no sólo porque yo les estoy compartiendo este aprendizaje, pero porque el nopal es parte importante del paisaje del Valle del Rio Grande. El desconocimiento del nopal por parte de algunos estudiantes, que al principio me pareció un poco polémico, ahora me parece una gran oportunidad para contribuir con uno de los legados de Gloria Anzaldúa, uniéndome a mi familia mexicoamericana que ya inició la descolonización cultural. Uno de mis objetivos actuales, es la de inculcar a mis estudiantes el conocimiento sobre sus raíces culturales a través del nopal. Así como lo estoy haciendo con mis hijas, así como le he visto con algunos otros estudiantes mexicoamericanos quienes, en mi opinión, han sido afortunados de conocer la cultura del nopal.

Aunque el nopal no se cultiva con finalidades de consumo en Texas, su importancia económica y ecológica se ha evaluado en torno al turismo y la cacería. El 85% de la dieta del jabalí y el 21-33% de la dieta del venado cola blanca se basa en este tipo de vegetales. Además, el nopal, por tener unas raíces tan profundas, ayuda a prevenir la erosión del suelo. A finales de los 90's, un estudio de Texas A&M University-Kingsville identifico el potencial económico de cultivar nopales y lo comparó con el valor complementario de los cítricos. Por ejemplo, la tuna puede producirse durante primavera y verano, las cuales no son estaciones para la producción de las naranjas. El potencial económico, está relacionado con el cuidado menos intensivo debido a sus altas tolerancias tanto a bajas como altas temperaturas, así como un sistema de irrigación mínimo (Simonson et al, 2005). A pesar de que el nopal siempre ha estado presente en el Valle del Rio Grande, muy recientemente se han publicado notas en periódicos locales, sobre sus propiedades alimenticias (The Herald Brownsville, 2014) y silvestres (Westervelt, 2018).

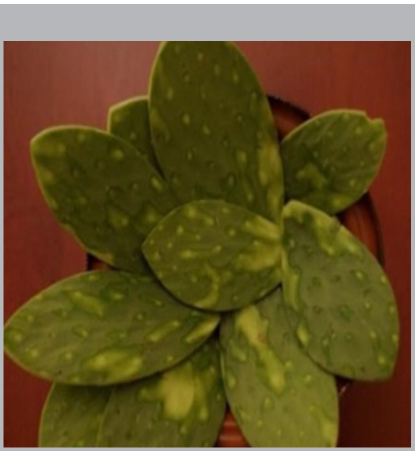
Guisos y propiedades medicinales: descolonización alimentaria

En el libro Decolonize Your diet, las autoras narran la importancia de que a los hispanos nacidos en Estados Unidos se les ofrezcan los alimentos ancestrales. Mencionan que es importante "recuperar y honorar" las historia, y las tradiciones y ellas lo están haciendo a través de la comida con su frase "La comida es medicina" (Calvo y Esquibel, 2015). Yo ya estoy forjando esta cultura con mis hijas y siento que es mi obligación moral, ayudar a difundir esta información a otras personas que no han tenido la oportunidad de conocer las bondades de un alimento tan importante para la cultura mexicana y mexicoamericana, como lo es el nopal.

Los nopales generalmente se venden frescos, sin o con espinas, enteros o en rodajas. En México, se les encuentra en mercados, supermercados, mercados ambulantes (tianguis), en donde, en la mayoría de los casos el vendedor limpia el nopal de las espinas. Se les encuentra también enlatados o en botellas, y pueden venderse secos con chile o con dulce. Limpiar los nopales, no es tarea fácil. Era verdaderamente extraordinario ver como mis abuelitas o mi mamá limpiaban el nopal. De niña, yo no quería ni tocarlo por miedo a aguatarme, llenarme de espinas. Lo mismo pasaba con el fruto, pelarlo es una destreza que se adquiere con mucha práctica. Si las espinas del nopal o de la tuna se adhieren a tu piel, la mejor receta casera es tallar el área que tiene la espina en tu cabello y ¡da resultados! Ahora, con los años, y mucha práctica, me volví una experta en limpiar los nopales y pelar las tunas.

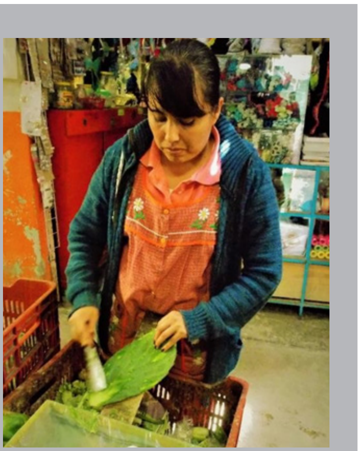
Además de darle un sabor especial a los diferentes platillos con los que se guisa, el nopal tiene propiedades medicinales. Contiene agua, proteínas, fibras, carbohidratos, lípidos, y tiene propiedades anti-inflamatorias (Feugang et al, 2006). Es bajo en calorías (27 kcal/100g) y se le considera beneficioso para personas diabéticas, ya que puede ayudar a estabilizar la concentración de glucosa en la sangre y a tener una buena digestión (Caiminagua y Andrés, 2018). La receta de mi mamá es preparar un licuado de nopal por

"Una parrillada es algo que tenemos que hacer cuando visitamos el Valle. Mis amigos que no son hispanos me preguntan ¿Qué extraño más del Valley?. Sentarme con mis amigos y familia y saborear esta comida acompañada de comida orgánica *Opuntia* spp, con queso de cabra hecho en casa. ¡No hay nada mejor que esto!" Edwin Quintero. Facebook.



Nopales sin espinas. Foto Dan R. Feria Garcia.

Ensalada de nopales. Mi casa. Chimalhuacán Estado de México, julio 12, 2018. Foto Dan R. Feria García.



Limpiando nopales. Mercado 6 de enero, Chimalhuacán Estado de México, Julio 12, 2018. Foto Dan R. Feria García.

Chicharrón con nopales en salsa verde. Mi casa. Chimalhuacán Estado de México, Julio 12, 2018. Foto Dan R. Feria Garcia.

la mañana y ponerle un poco de piña, y avena y ¡listo! Se toma completo. La receta de mi abuelita Magos era azar un nopal por la mañana y comértelo…claro acompañado de una salsa bien picosa y con tortillas.

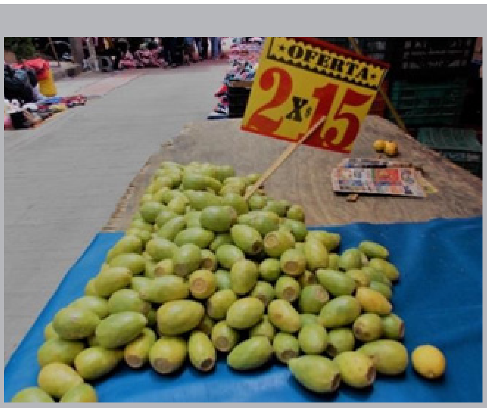
El nopal es una excelente fuente de manganeso (20% del valor diario [VD]), vitamina C (13% VD), magnesio (11% VD), y calcio (14% VD). Aunque este último podría no ser absorbido por el cuerpo, dada la forma en que se presenta (oxalato de calcio) (Hernández-Urbiola et al, 2011, McConn y Nakata, 2004).

La temperatura optima de crecimiento del nopal oscila entre los 16 y 28oC, pero pueden soportar temperaturas mayores a los 35 oC y mínimas de hasta 0 oC. En México se producen aproximadamente 812 mil toneladas de nopal por año. El 90% de esta producción se encuentra en el centro del país y su principal destino de exportación son los Estados Unidos (Caiminagua y Andrés, 2018). ¡En Internet se pueden encontrar hasta unas 339 recetas de comida a base de nopal! Mis platillos favoritos son los coloridos, como la ensalada de nopal con cebolla, queso y jitomate, o las salsas, como la de chicharrón con nopales.

Por si fuera poco, los niños mexicanos nos beneficiamos del uso de la substancia viscosa (baba de nopal) que suelta el nopal durante su cocción. A esta baba de nopal se le adiciona un poco de jabón y con esto se obtiene una solución para hacer burbujas, que son bastante entretenedoras, además de que nos inician en el mundo de la ciencia. Es muy fácil hacer este preparado, sólo se necesita la baba del nopal y un poco de jabón, doblar un alambre y usarlo para formar las burbujas.

Tanto el fruto, la tuna, como los cladodios (tallos que consumimos como vegetales), contienen aminoácidos, vitaminas y carotenos. El extracto de la tuna puede ser usado para prevenir el cáncer, ya que puede inhibir la proliferación del cáncer cervical, de ovario y de vejiga, y también puede suprimir el crecimiento de tumores de ovario en ratones en laboratorio, sin mostrar efecto tóxico en los roedores. La presencia de antioxidantes (moléculas que podrían prevenir o retardar el daño celular) como el ácido ascórbico y los carotenoides, entre otros, son una excelente razón para consumir el nopal y su fruto. Algunos otros beneficios podrían estar asociados con efectos anti-virales, anti-inflamatorios, anti-diabéticos (tipo II), así como sus beneficios para reducir el colesterol. Todos estos beneficios para la salud humana podrían estar atribuidos a los altos contenidos de fibra, betacarotenos y vitamina E. ¡Sin duda un buen consejo es iniciar el día con un jugo de nopal, como lo hace mi mamá! Otros beneficios podrían relacionarse con el tratamiento de úlceras, alergias, fatiga y reumatismo. Los beneficios de los extractos del cladodio se han usado para la producción de shampoo, acondicionadores, lociones para la cara y el cuerpo, jabones, gel para el cabello y protectores solares (Feugang et al, 2006).

Tengo la esperanza, de que las personas que no sabían sobre todas estas bondades del nopal y su fruto puedan integrarlo en su dieta. Pero más importante para mí es poder imaginar que estas personas se sientan identificadas con las raíces culturales de sus ancestros.



Tunas. Mercado ambulante (tianguis), Chimalhuacán Estado de México, julio 12, 2018. Foto Dan R. Feria Garcia.

Rojo Carmín - la cultura del vestido

Desde la antigüedad el color se ha identificado como un emblema cultural. La percepción y el uso de los colores han sido influenciados por factores múltiples (Phipps, 2012). En la cultura mexicana, uno de los productos más conocidos y comercializados, desde tiempos prehispánicos, han sido los colorantes carmesí, rojo y morado, extraídos de la "cochinilla", un parásito del nopal, y que se asocian a textiles lujosos que utilizaban los monarcas, la alta jerarquía de la iglesia católica y la aristocracia europea, además de gente muy rica en todo el mundo. Los colores rojos y morados se han identificado con riqueza y poder desde el imperio Romano. La atracción por los colorantes de la cochinilla en Europa a inicios del siglo XVI, se relacionaron con el color rojo profundo y brillante en lana y seda, que podía durar por muchísimos años, evidenciadas en algunas exhibiciones de museos. El colorante rojo fue usado como pago tributario a los conquistadores por los Aztecas. Los Mixtecas y Zapotecas de Oaxaca contribuían con grana de cochinilla a los Aztecas, antes de que estos lo hicieran como contribución a los conquistadores, lo que muestra la importancia de este producto. Aunque la cochinilla se cultivaba en Tlaxcala, la producción más fina se desarrolló en Oaxaca como parte de la una estrategia de monopolio de los españoles que duró hasta 1820 (Salinas, 2018).

Foto tomada de: http://urdimbre.com.mx/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Dactylopius-coccus-costa-cochinilla-colorante.jpg

Actualmente este colorante se usa también en alimentos, fármacos y cosméticos. El nombre científico de la grana cochinilla del nopal es Dactylopius coccus Costa y se le conoce comúnmente con los nombres de grana, grana nocheztli, grana del carmín, grana cochinilla, cochinilla fina, cochinilla del nopal, cochinilla del carmín o simplemente cochinilla. La cochinilla también se cultivó en los estados de Puebla y Guerrero. Después de la independencia de México, la producción de cochinilla tomo mayor importancia, pero la producción empezó a decaer entre

Yo y mi atuendo Oaxaqueño en el día de las mulas Ciudad Netzahualcóyotl, Estado de México. Diciembre de 1973.

Con mis estudiantes, festejando Halloween. UTRGV. Octubre de 2018.

Mi maestro Nacho, yo con mi vestido típico veracruzano y la maestra de danza. Festival del día de las madres. Escuela primaria Aquiles Sedan. Ciudad Netzahualcóyotl, Estado de México. Diciembre de 1982.

los años 1805 y 1818 quizás por la adulteración por los productores e intermediarios, y por la aparición de colorantes sintéticos entre los años 1854 a 1884. Los colorantes sintéticos podrían estar asociados con alergias y algunos tipos de cáncer, por lo que la tendencia actual por consumir productos orgánicos libres de aditivos químicos ha motivado a que los pigmentos naturales vuelvan a ser preferidos sobre los sintéticos. Esta podría ser la razón por la que el 2011 la producción de la cochinilla rebasó las 1,000 toneladas y en el 2012 fue superior a las 3,500 toneladas. Existen otras propiedades atribuidas a las cochinillas, como anti-microbiales, que todavía están en fase de estudio (Portillo y Vigueras, 2013).

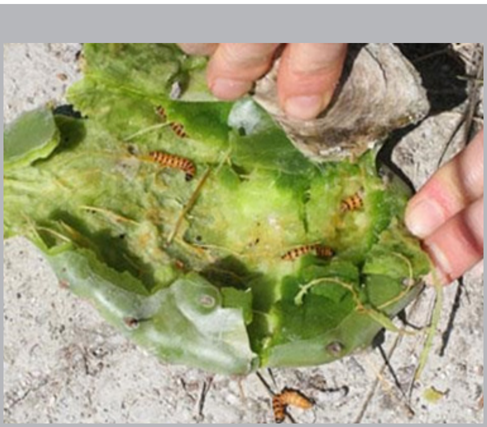
El color rojo es sin duda uno de los colores bastante usados en la ropa tradicional mexicana. Mi abuelita paterna, Magos, fue originaria de lo que es ahora una cabecera municipal llamada Villa Tejupam de la Unión, ubicado en la región mixteca de Oaxaca. En este lugar no existe un vestido típico. Sin embargo, atuendos compuestos por una falda amplia, fondo, refajo y un huipil son característicos de la zona. Los hombres usaban camisa y pantalón de manta blancos o color marfil. A mi abuelita le encantaba usar collares de todos los colores. Ella, junto con mi mamá, se encargaban de mi atuendo del festejo del día de las “mulas”, una tradición que la iglesia católica trajo a Latinoamérica, y a la cual nuestros indígenas adaptaron con los vestimentos tradicionales para bendecir a los niños. El día de las mulas es el día de Corpus Cristi y se festeja un jueves después de 60 días de la resurrección de Cristo.

Mi abuelita materna, Rita, es originaria de un pueblo de Veracruz llamado Villa de Yanga. El pueblo lleva este nombre en honor a un príncipe del oeste de África, que fue traído como esclavo a México y que se liberó y liberó a otros esclavos africanos. Se cuenta que este es el Primer Pueblo Libre de América, por estos acontecimientos. Los vestidos típicos de Veracruz son blancos con un delantal de color negro con flores rojas. Los hombres también visten de blanco con las famosas guayaberas y un paliacate rojo. En México, es muy común que, en las escuelas primarias del gobierno, tengamos festivales para festejar a los maestros o a nuestras mamás, o bien para celebrar el día de la revolución o el día de la independencia. En estos festivales, los niños nos vestimos con ropa tradicional y aprendemos la música y los bailes regionales.

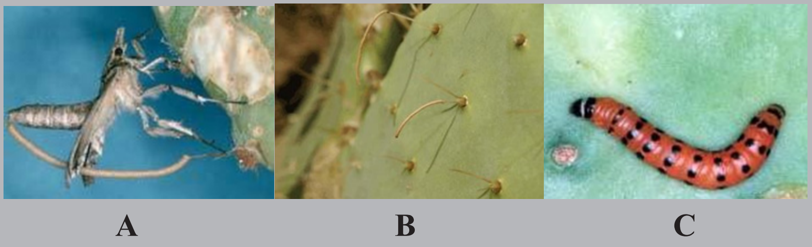
Aquí en Estados Unidos, yo uso atuendos mexicanos para compartir con mis estudiantes algo de historia. En Halloween, por ejemplo, me visto de Adelita, para explicarles a mis estudiantes la importancia que las mujeres han tenido en la lucha de liberación en México. En algunas fiestas de cumpleaños de mis hijas, elijo vestidos típicos mexicanos para que ellas los luzcan y puedan aprender un poco de esta historia. También me encargo de que vayan a clases de danza folklórica, para que aprendan sobre la cultura de la danza mexicana tradicional. En el día internacional, en la escuela primaria de mi hija, he llevado alimentos tradicionales mexicanos. Creo que es indispensable compartir todas estas enseñanzas con nuestros hijos, quienes están iniciando un camino en un mundo globalizado en donde la aceptación de las diferentes culturas y la diversidad y equidad son fundamentales. Para lograr esto, debemos conocer la cultura de nuestros ancestros, para poder respetarla y pasarla a otras generaciones. El colorante rojo proveniente de la cochinilla del nopal es una de las aportaciones de México para el mundo. El conocimiento y uso de las vestimentas y bailes mexicanos tradicionales, es sin duda una enseñanza que debe de seguir practicándose en la cultura mexicoamericana.

Amenazas: la palomilla del nopal

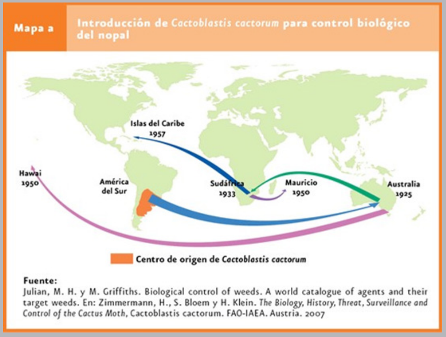
El cambio climático y la palomilla del nopal podrían destruir las plantaciones de esta especie. El nopal se estableció como una especie invasora (aquella que compite y desplaza a otras especies) en Australia durante los años 1920's, después de la introducción de las especies de este género al continente para la producción del colorante rojo obtenido de la cochinilla. Con el fin de erradicar a estas especies, el gobierno australiano introdujo a la polilla del nopal Cactoblastis cactorum Berg (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae; véanse Raghu & Walton, 2007; Mann, 1970 and Dodd 1940), estableciendo una de las historias de control biológico más exitosas en la historia. Cactoblastis cactorum se utilizó en otras áreas como África del Sur, Hawái y el Caribe para la erradicación de especies del género Opuntia que se consideraban invasoras. No obstante, después de su introducción en 1957 en el Caribe, especies nativas de este y otros géneros de la misma familia Opuntioideae (Nopalea, Cylindropuntia y Consolea) mostraron daños causado por la polilla del nopal (Zimmermann y Perez-Sandi, 2006), alertando a la comunidad científica sobre el peligro que esta polilla podría causar a las especies nativas de la familia Opuntioideae, a la que pertenece el género Opuntia. La polilla del nopal se registró en Florida en 1989 (Habeck y Bennett, 1990) y desde entonces se ha expandido en Norte América, el centro de distribución de Opuntia. (Andraca-Gómez et al, 201). Lo anterior ha causado una gran preocupación por los posibles daños biológicos y económicos (Soberon et al, 2001), especialmente en México, donde al menos 54 especies de Opuntia son endémicas, y en donde las especies de este género son un recurso social y económico fundamental para el país (Vigueras y Portillo 2001). Los estados de Coahuila, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas y el altiplano potosino-zacatecano, representan las zonas de nopaleras naturales más susceptibles al arribo de la palomilla del nopal, al igual que los estados en donde el nopal se cultiva como alimento (México, Morelos, San Luis Potosí, Puebla y Ciudad de México).


Larvas de *Cactoblastis cactorum* (Berg) alimentándose del nopal. Isla de Sapelo, GA 2011. Foto de Christine Miller, Universidad de Florida.

La palomilla del nopal se registró en Quintana Roo, México en Isla Mujeres en el 2006 y poco después en playa Ballena en Cancún y playa del Niño. Afortunadamente este brote fue erradicado para el 2008 antes de su expansión. Sin embargo, existe un constante peligro de que Cactoblastis cactorum pueda establecerse en México expandiéndose de las áreas en EU y el Caribe en donde actualmente se encuentra. Recientemente la Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP), región Tamaulipas, y el Instituto de Ecología Aplicada de la Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas (IEA-UAT), han establecido sitios para para monitorear la llegada de la palomilla del nopal a las costas del Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna (APFF) Laguna Madre y Delta del Río Bravo (Martínez-Ávalos et al, 2018). Actualmente la palomilla del nopal se distribuye



(A) Palomilla del nopal *Cactoblastis cactorum* (Berg) ovipositando. (B) Huevo bastón o “espina” en un cladodio de nopal. (C) Larva de la palomilla del nopal. Fotos tomadas de varios sitios en internet.


Mapa a
Introducción de *Cactoblastis cactorum* para control biológico del nopal
Islas del Caribe 1957
Hawai 1950
América del Sur
Sudáfrica 1933
Mauricio 1950
Australia 1925
Centro de origen de *Cactoblastis cactorum*

Fuente:
Julian, M. H. y M. Griffiths. Biological control of weeds. A world catalogue of agents and their target weeds. En: Zimmermann, H., S. Bloem y H. Klein. *The Biology, History, Threat, Surveillance and Control of the Cactus Moth*, Cactoblastis cactorum. FAO-IAEA. Austria. 2007

Figura tomada de www.conabio.org

en 22 países entre los que sobresalen los países caribeños y en algunos estados de los EU. El punto más cercano con continuidad terrestre al territorio mexicano se encuentra en Luisiana, a una distancia de 900 km. Un constante monitoreo de la palomilla del nopal es indispensable en las zonas del sur de Texas y Norte de México, con el fin de detectar a tiempo algún posible brote de esta especie (Martínez-Ávalos et al, 2018).

El monitoreo de la palomilla del nopal es un reto, ya que una característica evolutiva de esta especie es ovipositar un huevo que tiene la apariencia de un bastón o espina. El ciclo de vida de esta especie varía entre 64 y 180 días. Las temperaturas mínima y máxima para su desarrollo se encuentran entre los 13.3°C y de 36°C, respectivamente, mientras que las óptimas se encuentran entre los 25 a 30 °C. Las hembras ovipositan entre 18 y 99 huevos. Las larvas, conjuntamente, excavan un túnel en el cladodio del nopal y después de consumir un cladodio se mueven a otro o abandonan la penca para infestar otra planta. Las larvas maduras caen al suelo y tejen sus capullos, pupan dentro de las crisálidas hasta que emergen como palomillas adultas y el ciclo se repite. Los adultos no se alimentan, solo se reproducen. Es importante investigar más sobre cómo podemos monitorear los nopales en nuestras casas, sobre todo en el sur de Texas, ya que de lo contrario esto costaría muchísimo cultural, social, ecológica y económicamente a México (¡recuerda que el nopal en este país es tan importante que en su bandera tiene un nopal!). Aunque el nopal no se cultiva con finalidades de consumo en Texas, su importancia económica y ecológica se ha evaluado en torno al turismo y la cacería. El 80% de la dieta del venado y el 30% de la dieta del jabalí se basa en este tipo de vegetales. Además de que ayuda a prevenir la erosión del suelo. Por tanto, la importancia ecológica y económica de esta planta, siempre y cuando se trate de platas nativas y no invasoras, es muy alta. Debemos monitorear y cuidar nuestros nopales.

Tuve la fortuna de obtener un Endowment, en el Colegio de Ciencias de mi universidad en el otoño de 2018, que me ha permitido proporcionar becas a dos estudiantes para realizar monitoreos de la palomilla del nopal en varios lugares del Valle del Rio Grande de Texas. Tuve también la suerte de obtener fondos del Departamento de Agricultura de los Estados unidos para comprar material y pagar los gastos de viaje a los diferentes lugares de monitoreo. Si alguna planta presenta la polilla del nopal, se reportará inmediatamente al USDA para que se realicen las medidas necesarias para su erradicación.

Oportunidades de investigación en UTRGV

El nopal es una especie ideal para realizar estudios inter y multidisciplinarios. Varios estudiantes de la Universidad de Texas Rio Grande Valley (antes Universidad de Texas-Pan American), han realizado estudios sobre las posibles amenazas al nopal como el cambio climático y la distribución potencial de la polilla del nopal. Otros estudios han sido comparativos entre las propiedades del nopal con los cítricos. Los estudiantes han presentado sus resultados en diferentes conferencias científicas, locales, regionales y nacionales, como en los eventos de la semana del HESTEC (Hispanic, Engeneering, Science and Technology por sus siglas en inglés), en la conferencia de la Academia de Ciencias de Texas (TAS; Texas Academy of Science), y en conferencias en la Sociedad Ecológica de

América (ESA; Ecological Society of America). Las oportunidades para seguir realizando investigación sobre el nopal son diversas e incluyen los campos de la medicina, biología (interacción de especies, cambio climático), química, etc. Si se requiere de más información contactar al autor de este escrito, Dr. Teresa "Paty" Feria.

Entoces, como comunidad hispánica, que vivimos en Valle del Rio Grande de Texas, ¿cómo nos une el nopal?

¡En todos los niveles! Educativo, laboral, alimentario, medicinal, y sobre todo cultural. Nos permite encontrarnos, pertenecernos. Nos permite unir familias con tradiciones, con remedios medicinales. Nos permite conocer nuevos amigos, aquellos que también están interesados en seguir el legado cultural y aquellos que están confundidos porque nacieron en un país diferente a la de sus ancestros y deben de adaptarse a las costumbres de ese país. Nos abre oportunidades para descolonizar la cultura y para adaptarnos a una cultura propia, auténtica, orgullosa, como la cultura del Valle del Rio Grande. Nos ayuda a recordar que somos una raza, que está construida a base de esfuerzo, amor, tenacidad, y sobre todo de unión familiar que no se rompe fácilmente. Yo sí puedo decir con orgullo que tengo el nopal, no sólo en la frente, sino también en mi corazón.

Agradecimientos

Francisco Guajardo y Mariana del Socorro Cuautle Arenas aportaron comentarios a la primera versión de este documento. Gisel Garza contribuyo con la revisión del documento y su literatura. Cinco revisores aportaron valiosas criticas al documento. Amanda Tovar por todo su apoyo logístico. El colegio de Ciencias de la UTRGV me otorgo apoyo económico mediante un Endowment Fred W. and Frances H. Rusteberg que me ha permitido becar a dos estudiantes para monitorear la palomilla del nopal en el Valle del Rio Grande.

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An Anzaldúan Triptych: with Homage to Federico García Lorca

Randy P. Conner

INTRODUCTION

1 In perhaps her most well-known poem, "To live in the borderlands means you," Gloria Anzaldúa insists that "hondenying the Anglo inside you/is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black." That Gloria foregrounded her Chicana—or ChicanX—identity in her writings is indisputable, as even her title Borderlands: La Frontera: The New Mestiza indicates. I must admit, however, that sometimes it concerns me that, even if she played a role, perhaps unwittingly, in the construction of such, her identity has been largely reduced to that of "Chicana," with "queer" occasionally thrown in for good measure, while other aspects of her complex identity—her Leftist politics, her Pagan spirituality, etc.—have been obscured.

As someone who knew her as a beloved friend, and fellow scholar and writer—she called me "comadre"—and activist for thirty years, I know that she was very proud of the "Anglo inside [her]," that is, of her European heritage—primarily Basque, Spanish, and German—as she was of her Indigenous Yaqui identity, of which she learned late in life—I'm not even sure she told her family about this—and of her African heritage. Carolina Núñez-Puente, who teaches in the English Department at the University of La Coruña, Spain, appears to be one of the few scholars who has addressed, in "From Genealogies to Gynealogies," Gloria's affiliations with the Basque country and Spain. Those who loved Gloria often called her by her nickname, "Gorri," which means "red" in the Basque tongue.

I have titled this essay "An Anzaldúan Triptych" because I intend to focus on three poems that I think should be read together. "Triptych," from the Greek adjective triptukhon ("three-fold"), describes three paintings or relief carvings on three panels, typically hinged together side by side and used as an altarpiece. "Triptych" may also refer to a set of three associated artistic, literary, or musical works intended to be appreciated together.

I might have used the term "quadriptych," but Gloria's poem "Holy Relics" is known far and wide my many, so I've decided to focus on three other interlinked poems. Together with "Holy Relics," they were to have been published in a book of poems Gloria was working on in the late 1970s and early 1980s, to be titled Tres lenguas de fuego / Three Tongues of Fire, which, remains unpublished. These poems were meant to track Gloria's various ancestries—by way of well-known figures—from antiquity, in the person of Mary the alchemist—I'm reminded of Mary's maxim "Out of the One comes Two, out of Two comes Three, and from the Third comes the One as the Fourth"—to medieval Spain and the Basque country, to Mexico. The culminating poems of the volume were to include ones focusing on Malintzin Tenepal and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

In regard to "triptych" and the number 3, it is significant that Gloria possessed a keen and abiding interest in numerology. In "now let us shift," she advises, "To further the self, you choose to accept the guidance and information provided by symbology systems such as the Tarot, I Ching, astrology, and numerology." Although Gloria was well aware of the significance of the number 3 in the Major Arcana of the Tarot, with the card therein representing the Empress, or the Mother—a role that Gloria, although not becoming a biological mother, often enacted for those she cared for deeply—for her, the number 3 was perhaps most frequently linked to the concept of liminality, which she and my partner David Hatfield Sparks and I often jokingly referred to as "door number 3," as in the TV game show "Let's Make a Deal." This notion is celebrated in her poem "To live in the Borderlands," where the "forerunner of a new race" is neither male nor female, but rather a "new gender," a third gender—which could be seen to have suffered a binarization in the acceptance of the otherwise powerful term "two-spirited." As a very early exponent of Queer Theory, Gloria insisted that "queer" did not equal "gay." Rejecting a "gay"/"straight" binary, she argued that "Queer" inferred a third identification, one much more fluid than either term of the binary permitted. One might say that she suggested an identification of "bisexual," but her use of "Queer" signified a third possibility even more fluid than that. As she wrote, "To survive the Borderlands/ you must live sin fronteras."

I have subtitled my essay "with Homage to Federico García Lorca." The reason being, I seemed to hear, as I re-read many times the three poems I will focus on, Gloria reminding me, as she'd shared with me just after we'd met in the autumn of 1974, how very much she loved the works of García Lorca and how much he had and continued to inspire her own writing. In this regard, I was impressed once more by Carolina Núñez-Puente's "Genealogies" due to her realization of Gloria's "love for Federico García Lorca," which she asserts shines through in her "admiration for Lorca's nocturnal imagery" and which is "evident in her poem 'La vulva es una herida abierta,'" which Núñez-Puente associates with García Lorca's "Llanto [Lament] por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías." Gloria hints at her admiration of García Lorca in a chapter from her unfinished novel Prieta, in which she writes that, regrettably, LP – La Prieta – had "never had good recall – not even the ballads of García Lorca which her former lover Llosi adored so much."[2]

Gloria loved García Lorca not only for his poetic eloquence, his spiritual beliefs, and his Spanish heritage, but for other things as well, not least of which was his homosexuality, expressed in his "Sonetos del Amor Oscuro" ("Sonnets of Dark Love").[3] When I met Gloria, she had already read numerous gay writers, including Robert Duncan, James Purdy, and others, and she insisted I read John Rechy's City of Night, since it was one of the few works then published by an openly gay Mexican American writer.

The three poems on which I have chosen to focus on herein are "La Española y el Moro," "A Small Growing Fire," and "The Basque Brujas." While the third poem has been published, in the journal Sinister Wisdom in 1994, the first two have not. "La Española y el Moro" depicts a young Spanish woman who is abducted by a dark-skinned Moor with whom she ultimately falls in love. The poem metaphorically addresses the transition from the eight-hundred-year period when Spain was ruled by the Muslim Moors, when Spain was called Al-Andalus, to Spain's return to Catholicism, when Moors and Jews were exiled from Spain, with many fleeing to Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. "A Small Growing Fire" portrays an icy Catholic nun who falls in love with a young woman branded as a witch and whose repression of her desires leads to the death—the burning at the stake—of the woman for whom she yearns. The third poem narrates the life of two rural women who love each other and who, as "witches," practice the ancient Basque religion. Both become victims of the Catholic Inquisition, one being burned at the stake, the other left to grieve for her lover.

"La Española y el Moro"

"La Española y el Moro," like the other poems, is a narrative poem, a poetic cuento, a product of many hours spent in researching histories, travelogues, and other works at the San Francisco Public Library, particularly its downtown and Mission branches. In "La Española y el Moro," the world Gloria recreates for us is that of al-Andalus. "Al-Andalus," she writes, "he called this land," when Muslims, primarily Arabs and North Africans, collectively called Moors, ruled Spain. Their capital cities were Granada and Córdoba. During their reign, they constructed hospitals, bathhouses, and universities and built paved roads. They installed sophisticated irrigation systems. City streets were lit in the evening. They "transformed the Iberian landscape. They brought new crops, such as sugar and rice, oranges, lemons,…and coffee." They built libraries said to contain more than 400,000 books and manuscripts on astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and many other subjects. Muslim calligraphers produced thousands of books every year. They also brought games, including chess and playing cards, to Spain. They wielded a powerful impact on the Spanish language. For example, Spanish contains between 2,500 and 4,000 words of Arabic origin. These include: aceituna—olives, from zaytünah; albahaca—basil, from habaqah; albaricoques—apricots, from al-barqug; alcachofa—artichoke, from al-kharshufa; alcoba—alcove, from al-quba; arroz—rice, from arruz; azafrán—

saffron, from za'faran; café—coffee, from qahwah; fideo—noodles, from fidáwš; jabón—soap, from sabun; limón—lemon, from laymün; naranja—orange, from narang̃; and sandia—watermelon, from sindiyyah.4

Anzaldúa's imagery, including oranges, palm trees, and basil suggest that she not only schooled herself in the history of al-Andalus before she sat down to write "La Española y el Moro," but also that she most likely read and was inspired by the Spanish Muslim Arabic poems of Ibn Sara, who wrote an ode to an orange tree—"There stands the orange tree/ Showing off its fruits to me,/ Like gleaming teardrops lovers shed—;" Abd al-Raḥmān I, who wrote an ode to a palm tree; and Ibn Zaydún, who wrote of longing for "The beautiful days we spent together/ Our two spirits like sweet basil."

In "La Española y el Moro," which commences with the abduction of a Catholic woman by an African Muslim warrior, Gloria surprises us by having the woman fall in love with the handsome warrior, with his muscular arms, "long fingers," "stalwart neck," "thick lashes," and "satin black skin." He releases the women of his harem to be with the Catholic woman alone. The poem transforms into one of Gloria's most sensuous as they join in lovemaking. "A Moorish tapestry gazed down at us," she writes, with the "beaks of twin red peacocks touching," with the peacocks here referring to male beauty. "He drew the curtains around us," the young woman relates, "His necklace of heavy silver / rose and sank on my breast." For a time, life for "La Española y el Moro" goes well. They are embraced by sumptuousness, drinking in the pleasure that beauty bestows, signified by the perfume of the woman's hair—"oil of civet" —and of "jasmine and sweet basil" growing in the garden, the "luscious taste of the pomegranate."

The love of "La Española" for "el Moro" becomes tragic as Muslim rule ceded to Catholicism. Although the Muslim-centered culture of al-Andalus generally tolerated both Jews and Christians for centuries, with the exception of a poll tax, the Catholics among them desired to reconquer Spain, believing themselves superior to practitioners of Judaism and Islam. On January 2, 1492, the city of Granada, the heart of Muslim Spain, fell to Catholic forces, ruled by Queen Isabela of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon, the rulers famous for sending Columbus on the journey that would lead him to the New World. At this time, Muslims were officially exiled from Spain. Those remaining were forcibly Christianized. Qur'ans and roughly 500,000 Islamic texts were burned. The estates of wealthy Muslims were burned by Christian militias or appropriated by Catholics. Mosques were transformed into churches. Women were forbidden to veil themselves. Many Muslims fled to Mexico and other places in Latin America clandestinely and illegally.

In this light, Gloria may well have read the laments of Ibn Ghazal who penned, "O people of al-Andalus…/ Our place here is no more…," and of Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi, who wrote of Córdoba,

"For what do you lament so plaintively," I asked,
And [a bird] answered, "For an age that is gone forever."
And in a similar mode, the ruler
Of Córdoba spoke of halls now empty.
I asked the houses of those who had vanished,
"Where are your inhabitants to us so dear?"
The houses replied, "They lived here for awhile,
Then they went away, but we know not where."5

"Mata moros, mata moros! Kill the Moors! Kill the Moors!" Gloria has the anti-Muslim Christians exclaim – a famous phrase referring to St. James Matamoros—James the Moor-Slayer—and eventually becoming the name of a city in northern Mexico, bordering South Texas. "When it was over," Max Harris relates, "tens of thousands were dead…and the Arabic civilization of Andalusia was a thing of the past." Gloria describes the capture of the Moorish lover: "The muscles under his skin/ rippled like imprisoned birds," she relates, as she watches "them drag his unruly head / through the cobbled streets of Córdoba." Here, Gloria is most likely referring to the beheading of Moors by the Christian leader Geraldo the Fearless (died 1173), who beheaded 14 Moors in 1165, an event that is commemorated—although not condoned—each year in Zacatecas, Mexico.

In 2004, the year Gloria passed away, controversy arose in Spain when some governmental authorities in the region of Aragon suggested that the severed heads of four Moors should be removed from its heraldic shield.

"La Española y el Moro" commences with a quotation from García Lorca's poem "Cançion de jinete" ("Rider's Song"):

> *"Córdoba,*
> *Lejana y sola."*
> ***—García Lorca***
>
> *"Córdoba,*
> *Far away and alone."*
> ***—García Lorca***6

García Lorca, we know, was inspired by Islamic Arabic, Moorish poetry and music, in which, he felt, "love and death come inextricably together." In "Deep Song," he remarks, "The truth is that in the air of Córdoba…one still finds gestures and lines of remote Arab…The same themes of sacrifice, undying love, and wine…" In García Lorca's "Cançion de jinete," the rider rides on a "jaca negra" (a "black pony"); in Gloria's poem, the Muslim warrior rides on a "black stallion." Both are linked to the city of Córdoba.7

"A Small Growing Fire"

To write "A Small Growing Fire," Gloria relied upon her experiences growing up in the Catholic Church. She told me that when her father died, she wore black for an entire year. She told me that of her parents, it was her father who had most inspired her to become the writer she is. Her familiarity herein with the life of a nun is expressed in regard to the cycle of prayers to which she must daily adhere, reminiscent of that daily undertaken by practicing Muslims. For the Mother Superior, this includes Matins, prayers made during the night; Lauds, prayers voiced around 3 a.m.; Prime, prayers made around 6 a.m.; Tierce, prayers made around 9 a.m.; Sext: prayers at noon; None, prayers around 3 p.m.; Vespers, evening prayers; and Compline, prayers made around 9 p.m. In this context, Gloria told me in the mid- '70s that she had tried many times to slay the "nun" that dwelt within her, but that, despite her efforts to do so, she failed. Those who knew Gloria well were profoundly aware of her struggle to free herself from an ascetic's life and yet have enough time, as she put it, to devote to her work. Primarily, she remained a hermit, fearing, as she grew older and dealt increasingly with diabetes and other illnesses, that an intimate relationship might take too much time away from her writing.

"A Small Growing Fire," like "La Española y el Moro," is a tragic love poem. Herein, however, a nun falls in love with an alleged witch. This poem resonates with the first in echoing the theme of desire destroyed by institutional religion. Moreover, it confronts the pain of self-denial. Because it concerns two women, it also speaks to self-hatred and internalized misogyny among women nurtured by patriarchal structures, and to the terrible damage it may inflict on others, as in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, which Gloria deeply appreciated.

The nun is shocked when the young woman she has seen in passing and felt intense desire toward is brought before her, when she must judge whether or not the latter is in fact a witch. Her eyes reflect the "sunny olive groves of Andalusia," from her long black hair flows the perfume of oleanders, and her "lithe body" is as "supple as a poplar['s]." Wherever she "let[s] her glance rest," she lights a "small growing fire." The sight of the young woman reminds the nun of an episode that seems to be from her own life when she, the nun, was young. She recalls a "beautiful mosque in Córdoba," a young woman "tossing her hair" as she sees a "tall Moorish youth running to catch her," and then "yielding [her] red mouth to [his] black one." With echoes in this poem of images from "La Española y el Moro"—a vision of, Córdoba and al-Andalus, a mosque, palm trees, and a Moorish man—we are led to wonder at this point if the Mother Superior of this poem may in fact be the elder, embittered version of the woman who once loved a Moor. We are told that the nun thought she had "smothered/ to death" the fire that had burned within her when she was young.

This Mother Superior, for those familiar with The Handmaid's Tale, has become an Aunt Lydia. "Like our Christian fathers," Gloria imparts, she considered women/ the repositories and instigators of evil," and, as patriarchal theology insists, "the wickedness of women to be greater/ than all the other wickedness of the world."

In the poem, the Mother Superior has been described in terms of ice—"she chilled whatever warmth crossed her path"—whereas the young woman is described in terms of fire. The nun is dressed in black and white, while the young woman dances in a feast of color. Fueled by self-hatred and internalized misogyny, however, the nun must twist the red poppies and yellow marigolds she associates with the woman she desires into the hideous red, yellow, and black of the Sanbenito, the garment worn by heretics during the Spanish Inquisition. The young woman is ultimately led to the Quemadero, the place of execution. For a few moments, the beautiful color embodied by the young woman, fuchsia or vermillion, is restored, as "her dress flare[s] into bougainvillea blossoms." Yet finally, in terms of color, all that is left of the young woman after she has burned is the greyness of her ashes and the whiteness of her bones.

Without imitating it, Gloria's "Small Growing Fire" bears, in certain ways, an uncanny resemblance to García Lorca's poem "La monja gitana" ("The Gypsy Nun"). In García Lorca's poem, a "nun embroiders gillyflowers/ on a flaxen cloth": "How finely she embroiders! And with such grace!" As she embroiders, she has a vision resonating somewhat with that of Gloria's Mother Superior. She envisions "two gypsy bandits" galloping on horseback. It seems as if she is suddenly riding with them, across great distances, across rivers and mountains. Her vision embraces desire, and perhaps love gained and lost, as the "shirtwaist from her back" lifts up, and "her heart of lemon verbena / and sugar breaks into." She "long[s] to embroider / [the] flowers of her fantasies" – "sunflower[s]…magnolias…crocuses" – "on the flaxen…altar cloth." Likewise, Gloria's nun's vision is so intense that the fire of her passion for the young woman "burn[s] a hole in her fine needlepoint," causing her fingers to "break the threads she sp[ins]," and making "carding unbearable."

"The Basque Brujas"

"The Basque Brujas," alternatively titled "The Basque Witches,"— sorginak in the Basque tongue —is by far the most beautiful love poem Gloria ever wrote.

Gloria chose the term "Brujas" in the title of her poem for several reasons, the first being that if she had chosen to use the term "curandera," a traditional healer, she felt that this might have been interpreted as a Catholic term, and she wanted to make sure that readers understood her characters to be pagans. Rather than using the term "witches," although some versions do make use of that term, she meant to make readers aware that the "brujas" of her poem were from Spain or the Basque country rather than England or elsewhere. She also desired to contest the stereotypical notion that brujas only perform works of destructive magic. Although I don't recall the exact reason why she chose to use "brujas" rather than the Basque "sorginak," with which she was familiar, I assume with confidence that she felt many more readers would know the term "brujas." With "The Basque Brujas," I will interweave García Lorca's influence on Gloria's poem with others' and my own research.

The Basques (in Spanish, vascos, also, Euskalunak) have inhabited the region of the Pyrenees, nestled between Spain and France, since remote antiquity. It is a land of lakes, meadows, forests, hills, mountains, cliffs, and caves. Ancient sacred sites include "caves, like those at Azcondo…and Zugarramundi…, dolmens… springs…[and] steep places."8 Julio Caro Baroja, in The World of the Witches, relates, "The Basque country is a land of seafaring people; it rains a great deal and there are violent storms in the autumn."9 Sea and sun are often linked in Basque folklore. The sun is envisioned as the goddess Eguski Amandrea, Grandmother Sun.10

In "The Basque Brujas," Gloria has her narrator, Angeles, relate, "the shadows of the Pyrenees fall on our faces." Throughout the poem, Gloria depicts the landscape—la tierra—of the Basque country, with its lakes, meadows, forests, green hills, mountains, "crags and promontories," cliffs, and caves. "I come to the circle of clearing beside the great cave…"; "Up the narrow, slippery path to the grotto to the mouth of the cave;" "Like night I want to sink into earth to dwell in the damp cave of sleep…" Gloria not only describes the sun as "tug[ging] itself out of the sea" and as "drown[ing] in the sea" but also of the women attending the rites by flying "over the hills" in spirit if not in flesh, "then…dip[ping] into the sea."

In Basque folklore, Caro Baroja explains, "witches…have nothing to do with…Evil." He continues, "There were special meetings...on the four major festivals of the year, and more than two thousand people were said to have attended one of these."11 "On the other hand," he continues, Basque witches "can be linked up with the goddesses of classical antiquity, who presided over sorceresses."12 The predominant goddess of ancient Basque religion is Mari, who shares the same name as one of the lovers in "The Basque Brujas."

The other is Angeles, named after Angeles "Angie" Arrien, one of Gloria's mentors (and my own) in Tarot and Basque traditions, who explained that Gloria's surname was Basque, one resonating with her concept of "this bridge called my back."13 Mari is also known as La Dama de Anboto (the Lady of Anboto). As a mountain-dwelling divinity, she is "believed to inhabit the highest peaks of mountains like Amboto, Aizkorri, and Muru."14 She is also thought to inhabit caves and grottoes.15 She is depicted as a beautiful woman, finely dressed and surrounded by wealth.16 She sometimes travels through the air surrounded by flames.17 A shapeshifter, she occasionally manifests as a fiery tree, a ball of fire, a cloud, or a raven.18 Mari is sometimes depicted as a goddess of the moon.19 In "The Basque Brujas," Gloria writes: "The full moon watches ...fly... swoop over the moonlit cliffs; "The full moon watches from the beech tree branches"; "Dipping our fingers we paint moons on our brows."

Mari is a special patron of goatherds and shepherds.20 In "The Basque Brujas," the women are shepherds and are also goatherds, as their "eating goat cheese and brown bread" implies. Mari or the Lady is also a patron of wisewomen or witches; as such, she is known as "la Señora de las brujas" ("the Lady of the Witches").21

Aker, or Akerbeltz is the primary Basque male divinity with whom Mari is paired. He is not her husband, but rather her male consort. A phallic god, he is frequently depicted as having black skin, and he is thought to resemble Dionysus. He frequently appears as a black goat. Due to this manifestation, the place where Basque witches met came to be known as the akelarre, the "field of the goat." These gatherings appear to have been heavily erotic; in Los Mitos vascos, André Ortiz-Osés writes, "[I]n paganism, sexuality obtains a sacred character ...[It] signifies the fountain of life... the fertility of vegetable and animal life [and] the fertility of woman...denoting abundance and riches."22

The gatherings often included the sacrifice of a goat, representing the sacrifice of Aker. The blood of the goat was believed to fructify the earth; its flesh was cooked and shared by participants, imbuing them with its life-force, in this case, male life-force, known as indar (female lifeforce is adur).23 Gloria refers in her poem to "the rock where the Ancients sacrificed the goat," and to a "goatskin" and presumably a goat's "horn" worn by a priestess of the rites "on her forehead."

Gloria may well have been inspired by two of García Lorca's poems that focus specifically on goats.24 In the first, "Dream," he begins, "I was riding upon a billygoat."25 His grandfather remarks, "That is your path." In the second, "The Billy Goat," the poet "stare[s]/ at [a] huge billy goat," hailing him as a "devil," an "eternal mystic," and "the most / intense of animal[s]." He associates him with "satyrs," "Mephistopheles," and "Pan," and elsewhere to "Bacchus" and "Lucifer," linking him to pagan worship, as described in Gloria's "Basque Brujas." What is more, García Lorca subtly links this goat deity to same-sex intimacy, writing, "your passions are insatiable. / Ancient Greece / will understand you."26 Although, in Gloria's poem, it is lesbian love we encounter, I think this suggestion of male homosexuality might nevertheless have influenced Gloria's linking of the worship of the goat deity to lesbian love. Ángel Sahuquillo, in Federico García Lorca and the Culture of Male Homosexuality, further explains that García Lorca also links these correspondences to the sea and to the Akelarre, the "meadow" or "field of the billy goat" where the meetings of the witches were held.27

The veneration of Aker the goat deity was linked to the herb belladonna. It was said that the scent of belladonna permeated the houses of witches. In "The Basque Brujas," the rite in honor of Mari and Aker includes "rub[bing] belladonna on each other's breasts and buttocks."

For the Basques, a gathering of those called witches represented a coming together of the priestesses of Mari and the priests of Aker.28 Near "The Basque Brujas'" end, Angeles remarks, "Coiling serpents twine around my waist." In The World of the Witches, Caro Baroja notes that the Basque "queen of the coven" "sits on a throne; in her hand she holds some snakes."29 These snakes most probably evoke the image of Sugaar, a deity of storms and thunder, depicted as two coiling, intertwined serpents.

In "The Basque Brujas," Gloria relied upon her own personal desires and upon relationships shared by friends of hers. "She raises her hands to her hair, lets the pins drop," she writes, once more speaking of luscious, long black hair. Angeles "burrow[s] in the warm crevasse between her breasts" and breathes "in the smell from her armpits." She strokes the "embedded cones of her spine" and smooths the "taut skin over [her] hipbone," she seeks the "mouth of the philtre." "The well opens," she whispers, "My love, put your hands on my hips and your lips on my mouth and never leave me."

"With left hands we draw the circle, claim the crack between the worlds," Angeles says of the ritual they share with other pagan women, other witches; "We rub belladonna on each other's breasts and buttocks. Chanting, we dance to the center, dance back, dance to the right faster and faster. We aim our thoughts, send longing, mourning, celebration and joy like arrows." As they chant, dance, and project their thoughts, their "spirits…congeal into shapes, glide through the hollow, over the hills, then back to dip into the sea." They then "fall on the sand in each other's arms" and "paint moons on [their] brows" with menstrual blood.

Gloria's inspiration in depicting the central rite of the poem blended her research into Basque paganism and witchcraft with her admiration of Monique Wittig's The Lesbian Body and her experience in an early "Pentacle" group led by Starhawk, a San Francisco Bay Area witch, priestess, and activist, best known as the author of The Spiral Dance, which links Witchcraft and Wicca to Goddess Reverence. Gloria also braided her experience in this group with her knowledge of lesbian-centered rites and her own practices of divination, healing, and magic. Gloria was, in this regard, a master healer of her friends, especially assisting with stress and insomnia. She told me that one of her grandmothers had practiced curanderismo. I recall that during winters when we lived in Texas, her grandmother would send packages of orange leaves from the Valley, with which Gloria would make a thick syrup that would keep us from getting colds when others were falling ill. Near the end of her life, I asked her one afternoon as we walked along the sea wall in Santa Cruz why she had never "come out" as a curandera, to which she replied, "I am a curandera of words."

The worship of Mari, Aker, and other Basque divinities appears to have climaxed at the time of the Basque witch trials in the seventeenth century,30 when Catholic Inquisitors misinterpreted the gatherings as demonic.31 Not surprisingly, Christians condemned Mari as La Maligna (the "Malicious" or "Wicked One").32 Her devotees, together with those of other Basque deities, were subject to the Inquisition. Angeles tells us, "A neighbor points his finger at Mari and me. Men come and take us away. The Inquisition, their whips and racks, torture never-ending." She continues, "[F]ire tongues lick our faces. The hissing, the smell of flesh, burning pain." Then she awakens to realize that only Mari has been taken: "When I come to myself, I am lying on the floor by our hearth. I sit up, stare at the flames. On my left side a wound where she was torn from me. Never did I dream she would go before me." She then intones a praise-hymn to Mari not unlike that chanted by the Lesbian poet Sappho to Aphrodite millennia ago: "Lady of Anboto, Dama…gust of wind, a white cloud…burning torch, …woman with the feet of a bird. Oh, Lady, bring my lover to my bed again."

Although Christianization of the Basques commenced quite early, in the fourth century, and climaxed in the eleventh century, many Basques continued to practice earth-centered traditions in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries.33 Indeed, many elderly people continued to pay homage to Mari into the mid-twentieth century.34 Devotees of Mari have been said to drink Patxaran, made from the sloe berries of blackthorn and flavored with anise, vanilla, and coffee beans, to attain altered states of consciousness in which to communicate with her.35 This reminds me of a belief Gloria and I shared, and which I continue to believe—that just because the worship of a deity has been prohibited, this does not mean that the divinity has died.

Duende and "Deep Song"

Finally, and mea culpa, my "triptych" here devolves into a coupling, although not a binary, but rather two interrelated, sometimes indistinguishable, fluid concepts in which García Lorca believed, and two that Gloria found very inspiring when writing poems: duende and canción profunda, or "deep song."

Both are concepts expressed by way of complex chains of correspondences. For example, duende is described as a "mysterious power," somewhat resonant with the Yòrubá concept of ashé. But it is also depicted in terms of figures, such as the trickster and the "master of the house," as well as "waves of emotion" such as the "inexplicable power of attraction" and a "heightened awareness of death." As with ashé and Indigenous and Anzaldúan notions of sacred immanence or embodiment rather than Platonic transcendence, duende also manifests as "earthiness" or the "spirit of the earth." As Gloria speaks of the sacredness of la tierra, so García Lorca notes that "Spanish art is tied to the land."36 Perhaps linked to the occult, García Lorca sees in duende a "dash of the diabolical."37 Exemplary of duende are "the Greek mysteries;" the Romani poetic-musical form of the siguiriya;38 the works of Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz;39 Arabic music, as when "duende's arrival is greeted with energetic cries of Allah! Allah!;"40 and the rites of Santería / Regla de Ocha / the Yorùbá religion wherein, in García Lorca's words, "the blacks of the Antilles…huddle…before the statue of Santa Barbara [ie, the orishá Shango]."41

García Lorca writes, "All arts are capable of duende, but where it finds greatest range, naturally, is in music, dance, and spoken poetry, for these arts require a living body to interpret them…Spain [, however,] is [especially] moved by the duende, for it is a country of ancient music and dance where the duende squeezes the lemons of death—a country of death."42 "The magical property of a poem," he insists, "is to remain possessed by duende."43

"Deep song" is, as noted, resonant with, and at times indistinguishable from, duende.

As with the former, in García Lorca's belief system, Romani and Islamic Arabic- Moorish poetry/chant/ music are exemplary of "deep song." "Deep song" embraces "the air of Córdoba;" the traditions of the Basque country; the night; pantheism; and suffering and tears.44 Perhaps more pronounced in "deep song," although an aspect of duende as well, is its emphasis on "love and death inextricably [bound] together" and the belief that love is stronger than death.45

As Gloria speaks of the sacredness of la tierra, so García Lorca notes that "Spanish art is tied to the land." In all of the poems we have considered here, la tierra, "earthiness," the "spirit of the earth," perhaps even as pantheism, plays a central role. From the light with the clarity of crystal, the "blue sky burnish[ing] the tile[s], "the slopes of the Sierra," and the "wild Berber mountains" of "La Española y el Moro;" to the "sunny olive groves" and "fields of flowers…red poppies and yellow marigolds" and oleanders of "A Small Growing Fire;" to the meadow, "yellow roses," "green hills," "moonlit cliffs," the "shadows of the Pyrenees," the cave, and the waves of the sea of "The Basque Brujas," nature takes on a powerful role in the triptych of Gloria's poems.

As with both duende and "deep song," "La Española y el Moro" demonstrates the influence of Islamic Arabic- Moorish music and, as with "deep song," the haunting presence of Córdoba. In regard to duende, as the works of Santa Teresa inspired García Lorca, so they inspired Gloria when she created the persona of the Mother Superior, as they did when she sat down to write "Holy Relics," her poem about Teresa of Avila. As the duende manifesting in the Greek Mysteries and Yorùbá rites inspired García Lorca, so pagan Basque beliefs and rites, together with Starhawk's Spiral Dance, inspired Gloria's "Basque Brujas." As "deep song" is for García Lorca the song of night, so night plays a role in the Anzaldúan triptych: "night with its shadows approaching. / night with its mouth without edges. / Night with its waiting." And as the themes of both duende and "deep song"—especially the latter—pertaining to "love and death inextricably [bound] together" and the belief that "love is stronger than death" inspired the poetry of García Lorca, so the triptych of Gloria's poems speak to the tragic loves of a Catholic woman for a Moor, a nun for a witch, and that of two witches for one another—all destroyed by institutional religion.

Gloria and I were extremely close friends for thirty years, our friendship commencing in graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin in 1974 and lasting until her passing in northern California in 2004. Since we'd first met, Gloria shared with me her love for la Virgen de Guadalupe and for 'folk Catholicism,' which she in turn later came to hold in common with Cherríe Moraga, Ariban Chagoya, and other Chicanx/ Latinx writers dear to her, and with her beloved friends, the artists Liliana Wilson and Santa Barraza. Early on in our friendship, Gloria's and my love for Spanish literature, particularly the works of Lorca, as well as for the Symbolist movement, were nurtured by the brilliant UT professor Lily Litvak. Gloria was especially inspired by spiritual concepts in which García Lorca believed, especially "deep song" and duende, together with the knowledge he acquired of the Yòrubá religion (known popularly as Santería or

Lucumí) while he sojourned in the Americas – a religion the doors of which were opened for Gloria, my partner David, and myself by our friend and mentor Luisah Teish, a priestess of the religion. Teish discovered, during a divinatory reading for Gloria, that Gloria was a spiritual daughter of two female orishás, Oshun, a goddess of love and the arts, and Yemayá, goddess of the sea, whom Gloria praises in Borderlands and elsewhere. Also in the context of her relationship to the works of García Lorca, Gloria was mentored by Angeles Arrien, as mentioned above (more recently, Zainab Salbi, the author of Freedom is an Inside Job, has acknowledged Arrien's influence), who shared her knowledge of the ancient Basque religion with her, and explained to Gloria the meaning of her Basque surname, which led to the title This Bridge Called My Back—the surname meaning either a corral or, in folkloric terms, "over, under, and that which connects them." This is to say, simply, that Gloria's work was deeply spiritual, as was García Lorca's work, and that their spiritual mestizaje—their mixing of sacred traditions, in Gloria's terminology—, together with their gift for poetry, their Spanish heritage, and—as Gloria would put it—their Queerness, brought them together.

Gloria Anzaldúa's poems give expression to a "mysterious power" expressed by duende and in "deep song," a mysterious power that was in no small part García Lorca's gift to her and that may have also emerged from Anzaldúa's certainty that she had lived before, in medieval Spain, the Basque country, ancient Mexico, and elsewhere.

Chicago, April 2019

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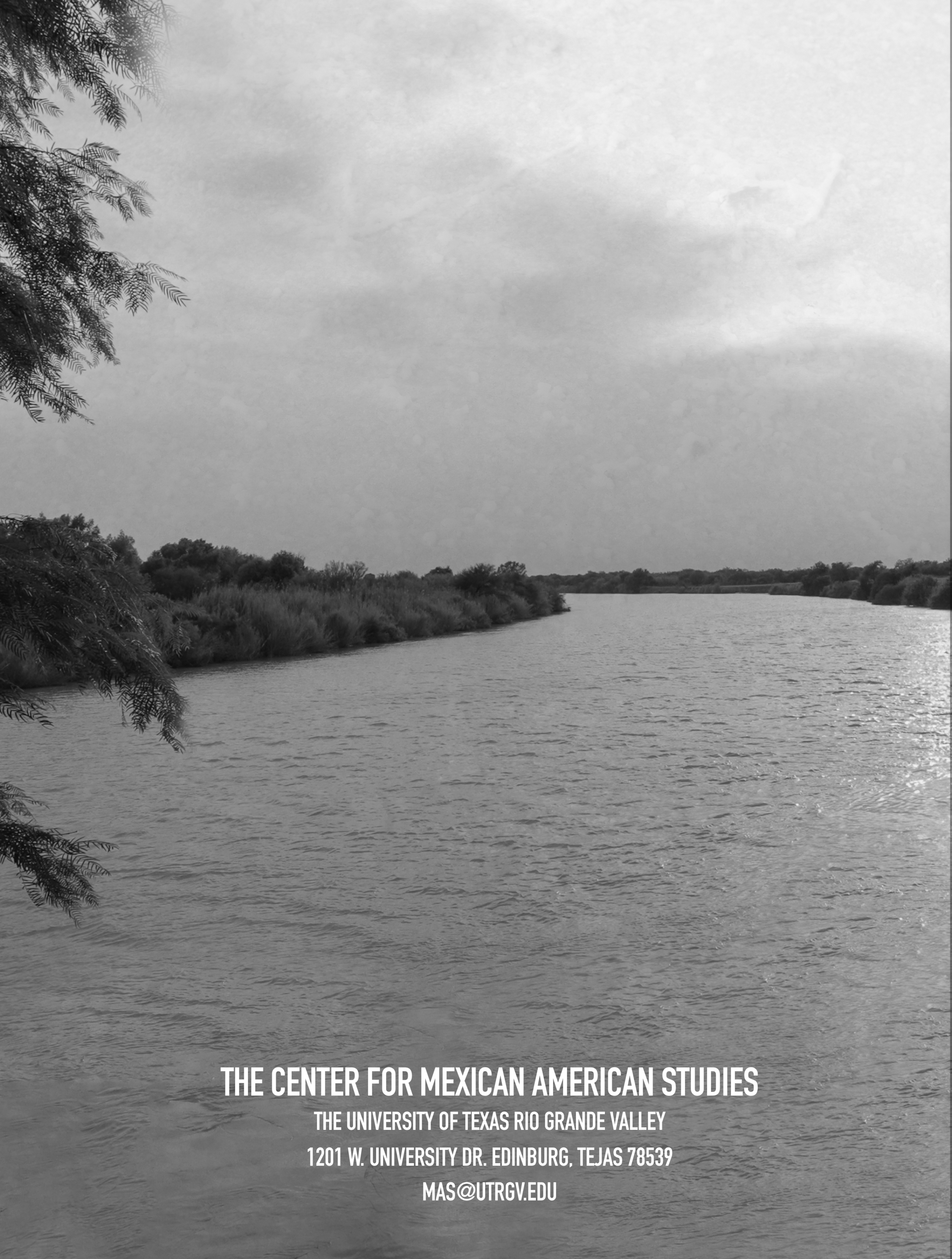
Notes

1. This essay is dedicated to Professor Emmy Pérez, who invited me to speak at the conference on April 27, 2019 focusing on Gloria Anzaldúa, "El Retorno: El Valle Celebra Nuestra Gloria," held at University of Texas Rio Grande, and to CMAS.
2. Anzaldúa, "Reading LP," 262.
3. See: Sahuquillo, Federico García Lorca and the Culture of Male Homosexuality; and see: Binding, Lorca: The Gay Imagination.
4. For information on a l-Andalusian culture, see: Aidi, Hisham. 2003. "Let us Be Moors": Islam, Race, and 'Connected Histories.' MER (Middle East Research and Information Project) (MER 229: winter 2003). http://www.merip.org/mer/mer229/let-us-be-moors#_14/(accessed January 29, 2018); Anything But Language, eds. "44 Spanish words with Arabic origin." Anything But Language, May 13, 2016. https://anythingbutlanguage.com/en/44-spanish-words-arabic-origin/(accessed April 28, 2017); De Castro, Teresa. 2002. The Role of Food in the Conflict of Two Identities: Moriscos and Castilians in early modern times (L'émergence d'une identité alimentaire: Musulmans et Chrétiens dans le Royaume de Grenade, [trans. Lynn Martin at ezania.net.] in Histoire et identités alimentaires en Europe, ed. M. Bruegel and B. Laurioux, 169-185. Paris: Hachette; Eigeland, Tor. 1989; Salloum, Habeeb. 2015. "Arabic Contributions to Spanish Music, Song and Dance." Arab America. http://www.arabamerica.com/arabic-contributions-spanish-music-song-dance; Zucker, Sam. 2017. "How the Moors influenced Spanish cuisine." CataVino. https://catavino.net/how-the-moors-influenced-spanish-cuisine/(accessed April 28, 2017).
5. Ruggles, "Arabic Poetry," 174.
6. García Lorca, Collected Poems. 469.
7. García Lorca, Collected, 474-475.
8. Caro Baroja, World of the Witches, 237-238.
9. Caro Baroja, World of the Witches, 163.
10. McCrickard, Eclipse of the Sun, 105.
11. Caro Baroja, World of the Witches, 160-161.
12. Caro Baroja, World of the Witches, 237.
13. At the time we met Angeles Arrien, she was teaching at CIIS (the California Institute of Integral Studies) in San Francisco.
14. Caro Baroja, World of the Witches, 237-238.
15. Caro Baroja, Los Vascos, 194; Caro Baroja, World of the Witches, 237.
16. Ortiz-Osés, Mitos vascos, 31.
17. Caro Baroja, Los Vascos, 194.
18. Caro Baroja, Los Vascos, 194; Caro Baroja, World of the Witches, 238.

19. *Gimbutas, Living Goddesses, 174.*
20. *Caro Baroja, Los Vascos, 194.*
21. *Caro Baroja, World of the Witches, 237-238; Caro Baroja, Los Vascos, 409.*
22. *Ortiz-Osés, Mitos vascos, 39-40.*
23. *Ortiz-Osés, Mitos vascos, 37-40.*
24. *Sahuquillo, Federico, chap. 4, pp. 128-161*
25. *García Lorca, Collected Poems, 39.*
26. *Sahuquillo, Federico, 130.*
27. *Sahuquillo, Federico, 128-130, 134-135, 143, 149)*
28. *Ortiz-Osés, Mitos vascos, 39.*
29. *Caro Baroja, World of the Witches, 160-161.*
30. *Ortiz-Osés, Mitos vascos, 39.*
31. *Ortiz-Osés, Mitos vascos, 41.*
32. *Caro Baroja, Mitos vascos, 194.*
33. *Ortiz-Osés, Mitos vascos, 27.*
34. *Caro Baroja, Los Vascos, 194.*
35. *Contreras-Gil, Zugarramurdi: El Pueblo (website).*
36. *García Lorca, In Search, "Play and Theory," 65.*
37. *García Lorca, In Search, pp. ix- x, Maurer, intro.; "Play and Theory," 57.*
38. *García Lorca, In Search, "Play and Theory," 58.*
39. *García Lorca, In Search, "Play and Theory," 60, 68.*
40. *García Lorca, In Search, "Play and Theory," 62-63.*
41. *García Lorca, In Search, "Play and Theory," 61-62.*
42. *García Lorca, In Search, "Play and Theory," 63-64.*
43. *García Lorca, In Search, "Play and Theory," 67.*
44. *García Lorca, In Search, intro., p. xii; pp.4, 5, 7, 14, 16-17, 21-23, 37, 47.*
45. *García Lorca, In Search, p. xii, 12, 13, 24.*



RIO BRAVO: A JOURNAL OF THE BORDERLANDS

VOLUME 24 • FALL 2021

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